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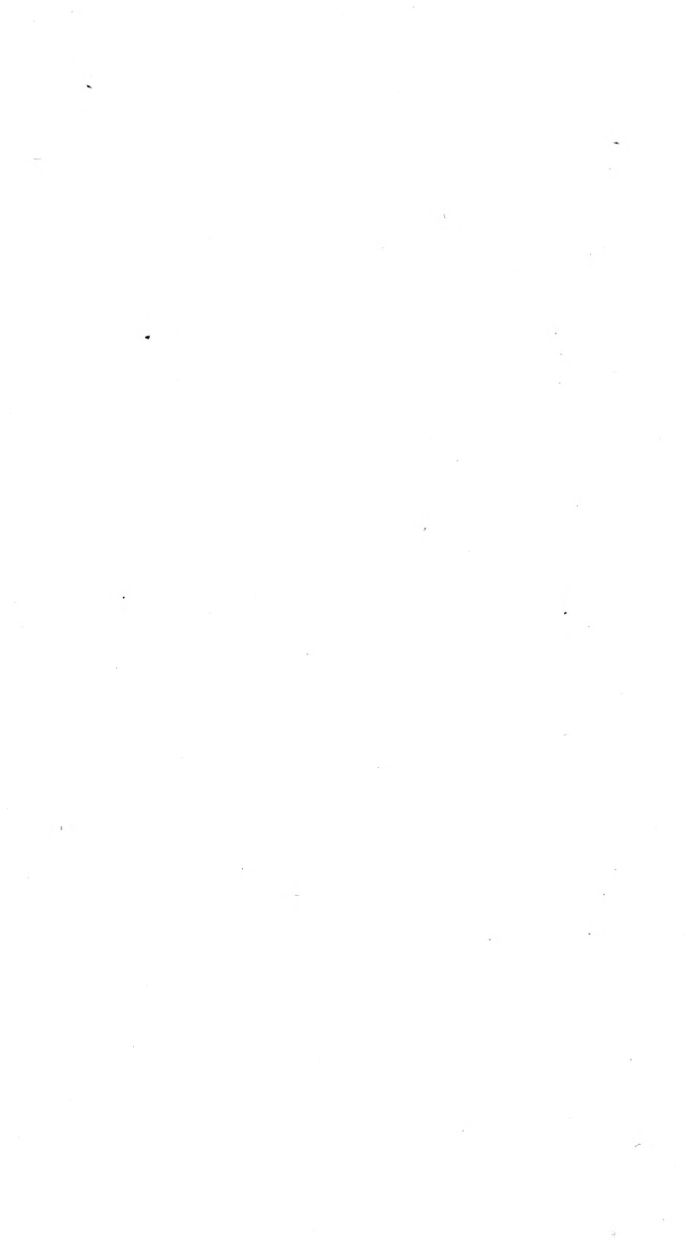
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L162



THE
HYPOCRITE;

OR,
THE MODERN JANUS.

A Nobel.

—//O//—
IN FIVE VOLUMES.

—//O//—
BY
SELINA DAVENPORT.

So spake the false dissembler, unperceiv'd.
For neither man nor angel can discern
Hypocrisy, the only evil that walks
Invisible, except to God alone,
By his permissive will, through heaven and earth:
And oft, though wisdom wake, suspicion sleeps
At wisdom's gate, and to simplicity
Resigns her charge, while goodness thinks no ill
Where no ill seems.

MILTON.

—»«««—
VOL. V.

LONDON:
PRINTED AT THE
Piner's-Press,
FOR A. K. NEWMAN AND CO.
LEADENHALL-STREET.
1814.

THE

HYPOCRITE.



CHAP. I.

THE dreaded morrow at length came; and Ellen, pale from her recent illness, yet doubly interesting to the eye, from the languor of her appearance, once more joined the family in the breakfast-parlour. Lord Edwin was anxiously watching for the moment when he should again behold her, and would have flown to be the first to welcome her returning convalescence, had not his uncle purposely stationed himself by the door, and as soon as Ellen entered, received her in his arms, with all a parent's kindness.

This conduct of the earl, followed by that of the marquis and young Beaumont, revived the sinking spirits of the lovely invalid, and gave her courage to reply to the tutor of lord Edwin, who, as soon as he could find an opportunity, expressed his joy at her recovery ; while his pupil, with a trembling voice, and downcast look, tried to give utterance to what he *really* felt.

“ My little favourite,” said the earl, “ must sit by me ; you know not, my dear girl, unless Caroline has told you, how dull I have been during your absence. Indeed I think we have all shewn manifest signs of the loss we sustained. I hope you will have no return of your illness. You must be very careful of yourself, my dear Ellen : have you any idea what could so suddenly occasion it ? ”

The blood rushed into the face of Ellen, which was immediately noticed by lady Caroline, who said hastily, “ I think Miss Woodville overwalked herself, uncle,

cle, when we went to the wood. You know it was a very warm morning."

" True, Caroline ; and your friend perhaps made too free with the spoils of her ramble.—Edwin, hand the roll to Miss Woodville.—The next time, my sweet girl, that we make a party for the same occasion, I will take care of you myself, unless you prefer a younger companion."

" You will make me happy by such an honour, my lord," said Ellen. " I shall be quite strong enough, in a few days, to attend you with pleasure ; and shall esteem myself fortunate in being selected for *your* companion."

" But what, my dear sir, will the young men say to this arrangement ?" inquired lord St. Laurence.

" They will have no reason to complain," replied the earl. " The marquis and Beaumont are both engaged ; the one to his wife, the other to his intended bride. Edwin and Courteney will have

the pleasure to amuse Clarissa, while I enjoy all to myself ; for I admit no rival near my throne, the smiles and conversation of Ellen Woodville."

" But you shall not enjoy them long," thought Courteney, who beheld with malignancy the increased affection of his patron, and the repentant looks of lord Edwin ; " my plan must be put into immediate execution, or all will be lost, and this girl become, perhaps, the sharer of lord Mortimer's immense wealth." Neither was the hypocrite better pleased with the conduct of the marquis and Adolphus Beaumont, who shewed an eagerness to testify their regard for Ellen, which added to the hatred he already bore her. Even the marchioness seemed to have forgotten her suspicions, and her consequent coldness, and acted with something like a return of her former friendship ; while Miss Beaumont preserved the same steady deportment ; for though, during the illness of her rival, she
had

had inquired after her, from motives of humanity, yet her aversion remained the same as ever.

The altered manner of Ellen towards lord Edwin did not escape either his or his sister's notice. The latter, who had suspected that her brother was in some way connected with the cause of her friend's sudden indisposition, took an opportunity of questioning Ellen concerning the change in her behaviour.

“Am I so fond a sister and so cold a friend,” said her ladyship, “that you fear, my dearest Ellen, to make me the confidant of my brother's faults? Yet let me not wrong your generous nature, which dreads to give me pain, by a disclosure, I fear, of Edwin's weakness. I am certain, Ellen, that he was the cause of your being so severely affected, when you sang that beautiful Scotch air, on the night when the Lishurnes were with us.”

“My dear lady Caroline,” replied Ellen,

len, "I would not indeed conceal any thing from you, but what would give you uneasiness; yet, since you press me thus closely, I will confess to you what otherwise you would never have known from me."

She then repeated all that she had heard in the antichamber—"I grant," said she, "that I have been much to blame, in listening to the passion of your brother; but I can with truth affirm, that I have never encouraged it. He will, I hope, do me the justice to acknowledge, that I, but a few hours before, firmly resisted all his entreaties to become his by a clandestine marriage. Perhaps the determined manner in which I proudly refused to yield to his tenderness may have led him to retaliate thus bitterly."

"My poor Ellen," cried lady Caroline, throwing her arms round her favourite's neck; "how I sympathize in what must have been your feelings at that moment! I glory in the noble
spirit

spirit of Adolphus; and shall love him now more dearly than ever. The marquis has acted as I expected; but my brother Edwin has become a convert to that hypocrite. It is Courteney, Ellen, that is at the bottom of all this baseness. Do not let it affect you too much, my beloved friend; I think my uncle loves you so very dearly, that he would forget and forgive every thing, in order to have you always with him. I never thought so, until you were taken ill; but the anxiety he expressed, and the uneasiness he felt, until he again saw you, has led me to change my opinion of the stability of his ambitious views. I shall have you yet for a sister, Ellen, I am convinced; and the gipsy's prophecy of the wedding will still come to pass. Come, smile, my dear girl, as you were wont to do. Edwin will lose my affection for ever, if he has not sense and courage to shake off the power of his tutor, and act for himself. Trust me, Ellen, he loves you sincerely: did

you but know how restless he was, how he paced the gallery, all the first night of your illness, you would pity and forgive a fault which, severely as I condemn him, proceeds, I am confident, not from his own heart, but the base counsels of the artful Courteney—Bless me, Ellen,” she added smilingly; “this month has indeed been as near proving fatal to you as the gipsey foretold; but remember, my dear girl, you are to overcome the machinations of your enemies.”

“The month is not yet over,” replied Ellen, trying to assume a look of gaiety. “I think I must begin to put faith in the sibyl’s fortune: one part has indeed come too true; *I have been deceived* in him I once loved—yes, lady Caroline, *once* loved dearly.”

“I like not that emphasis,” said her ladyship, “since it seems to imply an unchristian-like spirit, which I am sure you do not possess. I am angry and hurt at Edwin’s conduct; but as I know
better

better than you do the unlimited power his preceptor has always held over him, I cannot help lamenting that it should have influenced his actions in this instance, and that the natural goodness of his heart has not been permitted to take its own course. His countenance already testifies his penitence and shame, although he is ignorant that you are made acquainted with the cause. Dear Ellen, you must look over and forgive this first offence of Edwin, and treat him as kindly as you were used to do."

"The marquis would not have acted so," said Ellen, with a deep sigh; "and yet, excuse me, lady Caroline, but I always thought lord Edwin far superior to his brother."

"That is to say, my lovely friend, that you pictured to yourself a creature of the imagination, decked it with every perfection, made it faultless, and called it Edwin Wilmington."

“I may have expected from his lordship too much—nay, more than he could perform; I own,” replied Ellen; “but, my dear lady Caroline, are truth, sincerity, and honour, only visionary virtues? Your Adolphus proves to the contrary; and my brother Theodore, whom lord Edwin resembles in personal beauty, is another striking instance that all the virtues *may* reside in one bosom.”

Lady Caroline was silent; she could not deny what her friend had just said; and she therefore quitted her, and sought the marquis, to whom she confided not only the cause of Ellen’s illness, but her own generous wishes of bringing about a reconciliation between her and lord Edwin, and trying whether their uncle might not be persuaded to give his consent to their union. The marquis coincided entirely in the opinion and wishes of his sister. Ellen was no every-day character; she was worthy to be raised

to

to the most exalted rank ; and he would willingly exert all his interest in her favour.

Ellen, after her friend had left her, resolved to try the benefit of the fresh air upon her weak and trembling frame. She descended into the garden of the Castle, and struck into one of the most unfrequented walks, which led to a Gothic temple. Here she rested, to recover from the exertion she had just made. Lord Edwin, who had been on the watch for an opportunity of speaking to Ellen, had slowly followed her, irresolute as to the manner in which he should address her. At length, trusting to her own acknowledged tenderness, he entered the temple, and both alarmed and surprised her by his unexpected presence. She would have fainted, but from his supporting arms ; from which, however, she disengaged herself as soon as possible.

“ Oh, my beloved Ellen !” said his
B 6 lordship,

lordship, " what heinous crime have I committed, that you no longer view me with the same affectionate feelings as before your illness? Why do you shrink from my touch—from my support?—Speak, beloved Ellen; in what have I offended?"

The blush of wounded pride, of disappointed love, tinged the transparent whiteness of her cheek; and turning on her repentant lover her tearful eyes, she, in a voice of trembling sweetness, replied—" I am sorry, my lord, that you should ask of *me* that question; I am still weak from indisposition, and shall therefore refer you to *your own heart* for my reply."

" My own heart," said his lordship, " is full only of love and adoration for yourself, Ellen, my sweetest Ellen; it tells me that it can only beat for you, and that you are become more dear to me than ever, more necessary to my
happiness,

happiness, which is gone irrecoverably, if you persist in refusing to bestow on me this treasured hand."

At any other time, the soul of Ellen Woodville would have melted with rapture at the sound of lord Edwin's voice, at the sight of his handsome features, softened by the passion herself inspired ; but now she tried only to remember his declaration to Adolphus Beaumont, and the consequent insult he had passed on her and her family. Love no longer languished in her eyes ; they now sparkled with resentment, heightened by the deep crimson of her cheek.

"Carry your offers and your heart, my lord, to Miss Beaumont ; perhaps she will yet receive them, notwithstanding your ' unmeaning gallantry ' has made you of late neglect her. As for myself, I only entreat, my lord, that, while I continue a guest at the Castle, you will no longer make *me* a subject of trifling and of laughter. The only favour you can

now

now confer on me is, to consider me too much your inferior to honour with your notice."

"Gracious Heavens!" exclaimed lord Edwin, half petrified, "who has been so cruel, so ungenerous, as to make you acquainted with words which, as soon as I had uttered them, I would have given worlds to have revoked? Oh, Ellen! I cannot, I dare not explain the reason why I so basely refused to own a love which has become more ardent since that evening, and which I will not now hesitate to proclaim, in defiance of all caution, prudence, or advice. Thus, on my knees, I supplicate your pardon; I conjure you to banish from your mind my unworthiness, to accept me for your husband, and thus prove the falsehood I then told. Ellen, dearest Ellen! turn not from me; I am sincere, upon my soul, and ready this instant to prove my attachment by the most sacred engagements."

"It

“ It is too late, my lord,” replied Ellen, wiping away her tears, “ to make what you term reparation for your conduct. I myself overheard your confession, and the noble reply of Mr. Beaumont. To your brother I am eternally obliged, for his favourable opinion ; but what would have been my mortification, my agony, had they been like some young men I have heard of—had they ridiculed me as a vain, credulous girl, ambitious, perhaps, of aggrandizing herself, and willing to steal into a noble family, by clandestinely becoming one of its members ! I will not tell you, my lord, what I *felt* on being the dupe of your professions. The effect it had on my constitution sufficiently proves the severity of the shock I sustained ; not, my lord, in supposing that I had missed the opportunity of ennobling myself, but in discovering that *you* were capable of passing on me an insult, which even
your

your superiority of rank did not sanction."

"Ah, forgive me, dearest Ellen!" cried his lordship; "forget, I beseech, this one act of infidelity; I will instantly go to my uncle, acknowledge my passion for you, and implore his consent to our marriage."

"Do not, my lord, expose yourself unnecessarily to the displeasure of the earl; his consent, were it even obtained, would not now influence my actions. I forgive you, my lord," she added, bursting into tears; "but I can never entirely banish from my mind the deep regret I feel in being deceived in you."

"My God, Ellen! and do you persist in refusing to become my wife? are you actually serious, when you assert that my uncle's consent would not induce you to pardon my offence, and to bless me with your hand?"

"I call Heaven to witness my sincerity!"

cerity !” replied Ellen, with a dignity of manner that awed her lover. “ I wish to spare your feelings, my lord, because I believe that you repent your unkindness ; but I solemnly declare, that dearly as I *once* loved you, fondly as I cherished the idea of your being every thing that my noble brother is, I will never, although much your inferior in rank, give my hand to one who could for a moment disown the honour of his intentions, and place them to the most cruel of all motives, that which you term unmeaning gallantry.”

“ Then you no longer love me, Ellen ?” said his lordship, in a voice almost choked by his emotions.

“ I will not deceive you, lord Edwin,” replied Ellen, considerably agitated ; “ the affection I once felt for you was founded upon the belief that your soul as strongly resembled my dear Theodore’s as does your person. You alone had power to dissolve this delusion, to weaken
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an attachment which was the growth of your own imagined virtues. The charm no longer exists, my lord, that held in willing chains my heart; yet I cannot wholly forget what you once were to me; I pity, I forgive—but I no longer love.”

“Then I am lost for ever!” exclaimed lord Edwin, and rushed wildly out of the temple; while Ellen, unrestrained by his presence, gave relief to her feelings by a violent gush of tears. “Alas!” said she, “that I, who a few days back seemed only to live in the presence of lord Edwin, should now rejoice at his absence, should derive comfort from what would *then* have been my greatest affliction! Oh, Edwin! that I should ever live to see the hour when thy infidelity was proved, thy weakness discovered, and I, that once adored thee, now shun thy sight, and fly thy converse, refusing even to listen to thy repentant prayers!”

Slowly she returned to her chamber,
and

and sat down to write to Theodore; but the remembrance of him whom she had vainly deemed his counterpart again overcame her, and she flung away her pen, unable at that time to perform her wish. At dinner she timidly cast her eyes towards lord Edwin's seat; it was vacant: every heart seemed light but hers: she felt anxious to know where he was, to be assured that he had recovered from the wild despair which he had shewn in quitting the temple. She longed, yet dared not, to inquire of lady Caroline. Unwell, and low spirited, she retired early to her room, and placing herself in the window by which Deloraine had entered to his Althea, tried to amuse her thoughts by a volume of Walter Scot. In the midst of one of his finest passages, she was disturbed by the opening of her door. Raising her eyes, she beheld the marquis, with the orange blossom in his hand which she had dropped in the anti-chamber on the night of her illness.

“Be

“Be not offended, my dear Miss Woodville,” said he, “at the liberty I have taken, in entering your apartment. I have long wished to restore to you this flower, or to solicit permission to keep it. If you consent to my retaining it, I shall regard it as a mark of your valuable esteem; but I would not presume to do so without your leave.”

“You are welcome, my lord, to do with it what you please,” replied Ellen. “I wish not to preserve any thing which can remind me of the pain, the humiliation, I suffered on that evening.”

“By Heaven!” said the marquis, with animation, “had you honoured me but with half the notice you bestowed on Edwin, the wealth of the Indies could not have tempted me to conceal what I should have gloried in avowing to the whole world. Yet let me plead for my brother, lovely Ellen. His head, not his heart, is now to blame. So dear are you become to us all, that it is my first wish
to

to see you the wife of my brother; and I will, with your permission, endeavour to gain my uncle's consent to our mutual wishes."

"I know not how to express my gratitude," replied Ellen, affected by the kindness of the marquis; "deeply as I am impressed by a sense of your lordship's condescension and generosity, yet I beg leave to decline the honour intended me. Once, my lord, I should have accepted your proposed interference with rapture; had you been successful, I should have deemed myself the happiest, the most fortunate of women; but now, the alteration which has taken place in my sentiments and opinions renders your intended mediation in my favour wholly unnecessary."

"Charming girl!" exclaimed the marquis, pressing her hand to his lips; "this noble consciousness of your own value raises you still higher in my opinion. Yet, suffer me to intercede, to beseech
you

you to pardon a fault committed by one who adored you, and who would sacrifice every thing to be reinstated in your affection. Dearest Ellen ! on my knees, I beg you to relent ; do not refuse to grant my request ; you know not the happiness you have now the power of conferring on me."

Ellen was just going to reply to the entreaties of the marquis, who again pressed her hand to his lips, when the angry voice of the marchioness made her start from her seat.

" Is this well, my lord," she cried, in a tone of jealous reproach, " to steal away from your family, to enjoy a *tête-à-tête* with Miss Woodville, who I supposed was far differently engaged ? But it seems that, ill as she pretends to be, she can entertain a married man in her private apartments, and listen to his criminal attachment, with no very great signs of displeasure or reluctance."

" Jemima !" said the marquis, colouring
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ing with anger, "another such a speech as that, and we part for ever. Go back to those who counselled you to become a spy over the actions of one too pure and perfect to give cause for such despicable suspicions. But beware how you tamper with my affection, or impute to me a crime of which I am innocent. If Miss Woodville can overlook the gross insult you have offered her—if she can make allowance for a meanness she is incapable of herself, and think only of what you seem lately to have wholly forgotten—your former friendship, I may, perhaps, for this once, forgive you; but, if you value my regard, from this hour banish from your breast a passion which will rapidly undermine your peace, and make me an alien to your arms."

He then quitted the room, with a countenance strongly marked by displeasure and resentment. The marchioness burst into tears; and darting an angry glance at Ellen, hastily followed her

her husband, leaving her once-loved friend in a state of mind truly pitiable.

“ Alas !” said she, “ what fresh mortification am I fated to endure ! Deceived by him I tenderly loved—suspected of a crime which my soul abhors, by one I considered as my steady friend, how shall I act ? To remain at the Castle, an eyesore to the marchioness, and the innocent cause of her dislike, is impossible ; yet to return home thus disgraced will be equally painful. Oh, my Theodore ! it is now that I perceive the truth of your cautions, the wisdom of your counsels ; it is now that I find how dangerous it is for a young girl, in my sphere of life, to associate with those whose rank and fortune alone make them her superiors.”

Conscious, however, of her innocence, she determined to join the family at tea, hoping also to learn what had become of lord Edwin. The frowns of the marchioness, and the angry looks of her husband, convinced Ellen that their
quarrel

quarrel had been renewed. She even fancied that Miss Beaumont eyed her with a contemptuous sneer, as the marquis hastened to lead her to a seat.

“How,” said he, in a low voice, “can I expect you to excuse the shameful behaviour of Jemima? Yet believe me, my sweet friend, that I feel more hurt than I can express. I fear that your pardon cannot be gained, for such blind, such unforgivable folly.”

“Alas! my lord,” replied Ellen, “I have long had cause to lament the loss of the marchioness’s confidence; yet the consciousness of not meriting her indifference has enabled me to bear with it. Let me entreat of you, as you value my peace of mind, not to do any thing to increase her dislike to me. I know not if I am wrong in my conjectures, but I think I owe this piece of poor spite and revenge to one who has succeeded me in the heart of the marchioness. Yet, my lord, as I own that your visit might give

rise to a malicious interpretation, I beg that you will, for my sake, do all in your power to correct the unkind suspicion of your wife, and to clear me of having expected your visit."

"For your sake only," replied the offended marquis, "I will try to convince Jemima of her error, and make her sensible of the gross injustice she has been guilty of; under any other circumstances, I would not condescend to exculpate myself."

Ellen was in hopes that lady Caroline would ask her to walk after tea, and that, in the course of conversation, she might mention her brother; but the earl proposed music, and his niece never refused willingly to obey his desires. The marchioness, Courteney, and Clarissa Beaumont, withdrew; nor did they appear again for that evening; while Ellen exerted herself to the utmost of her power, to amuse and charm her attentive hearers.

The

The next morning, lord Edwin was still absent; and the marchioness breakfasted in her own room. Lady Caroline's ever lively features wore the sober air of reflection—a thing so unusual, that Ellen felt anxious to know the cause, and rejoiced when her friend made a movement to accompany her to her own chamber.

“Heighho !” said lady Caroline, “ I know not what is the matter with me this morning ; but I am horridly out of spirits. I am sure something very disagreeable is going to happen to me : the marquis also looks as queer as I do, though that is not to be so much wondered at, since he and Jemima, I find, had a severe quarrel yesterday, and they are not yet reconciled. If she knew his real disposition, she would avoid as much as possible all appearance of wishing to govern him. It is more than any of his family ever could do, and Jemima has

chosen the very worst method to obtain her desire."

Ellen felt grieved at this intelligence, since she had no doubt but that the marquis would fulfil his promise, and that the fault of their not being reconciled must rest solely with his wife. She however saw no occasion to conceal from lady Caroline the share she had unfortunately had in their misunderstanding, and therefore repeated to her the whole of what had passed, not without expressing her sorrow that the kind intentions of the marquis should have been the cause of exciting the jealousy of the marchioness.

"Although I admit," said she, "that the visit of your brother might naturally give rise to ill-natured surmises, yet I should have thought that our former intimacy was such as to have convinced the marchioness that I was incapable of trifling with the repose of any human being, and that I also possessed a mind superior
to

to the arts of coquetry—an amusement which I have ever held in the greatest abhorrence.”

Lady Caroline was much hurt by the narration of her friend. “Some one is at the bottom of all this, I am confident,” said her ladyship; “for I must do Jemima the justice to say, that I do not believe, unless great pains had been taken to make her suspicious, that she would ever have imagined any thing improper in my brother’s attentions. I am positive, Ellen, that Clarissa and Courteney have exerted all their influence to poison her mind against you; and that they will never rest until they have hatched up some abominable falsehood, to weaken the evident affection my uncle feels for you. I should be sorry to be unjust to any one,” she continued; “but I firmly believe, that Clarissa’s hatred would lead her to do what at another time would make her shudder, if by doing it she could but get rid of so formidable a rival. Do not look

so sad, Ellen ; my affection is unchangeable: it may perhaps increase, from the persecuting malice of others, but it can never diminish."

" Dearest lady Caroline," replied Ellen, as she leaned on the affectionate bosom of her steady friend, " it shall be my study to convince you how sacredly I value your generous friendship, which has stood proof against all the insinuations of my enemies. Never can I sufficiently repay such disinterested tenderness."

A gentle tap at the door made Ellen rise, to see who it was that sought admittance.

" I come," said Courteney, " from the marchioness, who requested me to give you this letter, which was enclosed in one to herself, from Miss Dora Louvaine. I hope all are well at the Parsonage."

Ellen hastily broke open the letter, and turned pale as death, while her eyes ran over the few lines it contained, written
by

by Fanny Woodville, requesting her to return home immediately, as her mother was much indisposed, and wished to see her. This was sufficient to alarm the filial tenderness of Ellen, who begged Mr. Courteney to order a chaise to be procured for her directly. Then ringing for her maid, she desired her to get ready in half-an-hour to set off for the Parsonage.

“ My dearest Ellen,” said lady Caroline, who had been silent until now, “ stay till I inform my uncle of this unpleasant intelligence. His carriage and four horses will convey you more rapidly than a hired chaise. You must not go alone ; I will ask my mother to let me accompany you.”

Her ladyship then ran, with tears in her eyes, to the drawing-room, where lord Mortimer and his sister were sitting. The business of her visit was soon made known ; but her mother, to whom the marchioness had just imparted the source

of her distress, out of compliment to her daughter-in-law's feelings, refused the request of lady Caroline; while lord Mortimer, who gave no credit to the suspicions of the jealous wife, expressed his sorrow at thus unexpectedly being deprived of the society of his fascinating little friend, and went with his weeping niece to the chamber of her favourite.

Ellen returned the paternal embrace of the earl with every demonstration of gratitude; yet so eager was she to set out for the Parsonage, that she could hardly be persuaded to take some refreshment.

“Courteney shall see you safe into the care of your worthy family,” said lord Mortimer. “Much as I shall feel the void your loss will occasion, yet, my dear child, I will not attempt to detain you. Write to me as soon as you get home, where I hope you will find your amiable mother recovering from this unlucky illness, which robs us of your presence.”

presence. Tell her, my sweet girl, that I have passed many happy hours in your company ; and that I shall hope she will not decline the invitation of my sister, to bring you and Fanny Woodville this winter to town ; in that case, I shall certainly give up my intention of staying at the Castle, and shall make one of the party."

Lady Caroline, as soon as they were alone, flung her arms round the neck of Ellen, and sobbed aloud on her bosom—" Write to me constantly," said she, " my dearest friend, or I shall be miserable ; I know not what possessed me, but I thought that something would happen to deprive me of you sooner than was expected. But, my beloved Ellen, in the course of a short time I shall be mistress of a house of my own, and of my own actions. Adolphus, I know, will welcome you to his, with all the affection of a brother. You will come, Ellen, will you not, as soon as we are married?"

“My dearest lady Caroline, how can I repay this disinterested kindness? Yes, indeed I will come to you with all possible expedition. Tell Mr. Beaumont and the marquis, that it gives me no small concern to be obliged to leave the Castle during their absence; but that I carry with me a grateful remembrance of the many proofs I have received of their good opinion and friendship. Should lord Edwin——” here her voice faltered, and her cheek grew red——“mention my name to you, tell him, dear lady Caroline, that I forgive him all the pain he has caused me to feel on his account; that I shall pray unceasingly for his happiness; and that I hope that my removal will have the effect of reuniting him to Miss Beaumont.”

She now hurried down stairs, to take leave of the earl and the rest of the family; while lady Caroline sought not to conceal or repress her grief at parting from her. Courteney was ready to attend

tend her. Once more embracing her sorrowing friend, Ellen hastened to the travelling-carriage of lord Mortimer, followed by Leopold and Naomi; not, however, before she had received the benediction of Mrs. Mason, who was equally as much affected as lady Caroline by her unexpected departure.

CHAP. II.

NEITHER the marchioness nor Clarissa Beaumont had quitted their chambers to bid Ellen farewell; and she, on her part, was not sorry to be relieved from the disagreeableness of meeting with two persons who had acted so ungenerously towards her. Her own anxiety and impatience to be at home did not, however, prevent her from noticing the unusual taciturnity of Courteney, who

c 6 complained

complained of being rather indisposed, of which, indeed, the ashy hue of his countenance bore testimony ; but whether his indisposition was in body or mind, Ellen was unable to form any judgment.

The Castle was distant from the Parsonage about sixty miles ; and Ellen was anticipating the pleasure she should feel in being able to arrive before dark, when Courteney declared that he found himself so extremely ill, as to be obliged to stay some time at the inn where they now halted to change horses, and to procure some refreshment. Ellen, ever alive to the feelings of humanity, testified the sincerest concern at his illness, and entreated him to go to bed, and send for medical advice ; proposing to proceed the remainder of the journey without him. To this he strongly objected, as it lay through cross roads, which were unsafe for women to travel unprotected. Ellen, however, persisted in not suffering

ing

ing him to accompany her, unless he got better within an hour.

“ You say I have only twenty miles to go before I shall reach home,” said she ; “ it will be moonlight, and I feel no terror at the idea of robbers ; believing myself as safe in a forest, under the protection of Heaven, as I should be at the Parsonage. My only regret is, to be compelled, from my dear mother’s indisposition, to leave you in your present state.”

Courteney expressed himself grateful for her kindness, acknowledging that he found himself worse, and should be obliged to take her advice, and retire to bed ; promising, however, to visit the Parsonage as soon as he had recovered, since he should be miserable unless personally assured of her safety—“ It is so unlucky,” said he, “ that we only brought two servants with us, as one of them is gone to the next town for a doctor ; and unless you wait his return, you will have no
one

one but the postillion to guard you on the road."

Ellen's courage began to give way ; it was already late, and the rising moon was enveloped in dark clouds ; yet still her anxiety to be at home made her resolve to proceed, while the painful timidity of Naomi drew off her attention from herself, and called forth all her spirits to exhilarate those of her trembling attendant. The first two miles of their way was through a thick forest, gloomy and dark, except now and then enlightened by the pale rays of the moon, as she emerged from one black cloud to pass under another. The melancholy owl flew from tree to tree, screaming forth its discordant notes, and adding to the fears of Naomi, who vainly endeavoured to conceal them from her young mistress. At length she could no longer dissemble—"Good Heaven and its holy angels send us safe home !" cried Naomi. " I wish John would drive
faster

faster through this ugly wood ; every tree that I see frightens me almost to death. Do, my dear Miss Ellen, speak to him to make more haste."

" Do not terrify yourself in this manner, Naomi," replied her mistress ; " John will not make any unnecessary delay, for his own sake, as well as ours ; and it may not be prudent to go faster through the forest such a night as this, especially as he has not been here before. Courage, Naomi ! do not be so depressed ; else when you arrive at the Parsonage, your fellow-servants will rally you upon having left your heart and your good spirits at the Castle."

" I fear, Miss, that we shall not see the Parsonage just yet ; I only wish to God that we were there."

" For Heaven's sake ! what do you mean ?" inquired Ellen, alarmed in her turn.

" You will be angry with me, perhaps,"

haps," replied Naomi; "but I happened to be in the housekeeper's room this morning when the letters were brought. As they lay on the table, Mrs. Mason asked me to sort them out for the family; there was only one for the marchioness, which I gave to Mr. Courteney, who came for it; and I am quite positive that it had a very different post-mark to our letters that come from home."

Ellen felt electrified: a painful suspicion now darted across her mind; yet, unwilling to betray it to her maid, she tried to convince her that she had been mistaken; she was, however, unsuccessful.

"Sally, the marchioness's maid," continued Naomi, "told me that her mistress and Miss Beaumont had taken a great dislike to you, Miss Ellen; and that she was sure that all their whispering and walking with Mr. Courteney was not for any good; and this morning, when he carried her the letter, she was
standing

standing near enough to see that what was inside it came in a blank sheet of paper. But I fear we have other enemies to dread than the foolish marchioness."

"You forget yourself, Naomi; this is not the way to speak of your superiors, and of my friends."

"Oh, do not be angry with me, dear Miss Ellen," said Naomi, sobbing; "I meant no harm, indeed; but if she was the queen of England, and did not love you, I should never speak of her with respect. There is lord Edwin's own man, Simpson, that I thought the best creature in the world, and refused to marry the butler, who is his betters, and all for his sake; but I do not value him a pin now, because I think he is deceitful, and talks too much to Mr. Courteney, who I am certain is an arrant hypocrite."

"Again, Naomi!"

"Well, I cannot help it, Miss Ellen, if you kill me for it; my heart is so full,
just

just now, I must speak my mind. As sure as I am living, before we left the inn, I saw Simpson peeping out of one of the windows ; I could not be mistaken, for I know his features too well."

The alarm of Ellen increased—"Have you any idea, Naomi, where lord Edwin went, when he quitted the Castle yesterday ?"

"No, Miss ; it was given out that his lordship and Mr. Lisburne were going on a shooting-party ; but I did not believe it. I saw him come in from the garden, much agitated ; he called Simpson to go and see whether Mr. Courteney was in the drawing-room, as he wanted him immediately in the blue parlour. After Mr. Courteney and his lordship had been absent an hour and a half together, Simpson received orders to get ready to attend his master, who meant to follow Mr. Lisburne and his brothers on a shooting expedition. Simpson said smilingly to me, as he took leave, 'I shall see you again,

again, Naomi, sooner than you think for.' He may see me ; but I shall never love him any more, if he has any thing to do with the least thing that can give you pain."

Ellen, trembling with fear and agitation, yet forgot not to thank Naomi for her affectionate fidelity. The postillion now stopped, and acknowledged that he was afraid he had missed his way, since he could not discover the path he was directed to pass through, in order to gain the road ; " but," said he, " I see a light through those trees, which must come from some house. Had I not better step and ask the right way ? though perhaps, Miss, you wont like to stay here alone."

The rain now began to fall in torrents ; and Naomi entreated her mistress not to be left in the wood. Ellen, therefore, desired the servant to drive as near as he could towards the place whence the light proceeded ; and if it were a decent house,

house, they would alight, until the storm was over. If John had missed his way, he found no difficulty, however, in finding *that* which soon conducted them to a small, neat farm-house, where, upon inquiry, they heard that they had gone considerably out of the regular path; and Ellen, pleased by the looks of the woman, got out of the carriage with Naomi, whose terror increased, as the vivid flashes of lightning passed rapidly across her face, and the thunder rolled awfully above her head.

They had scarcely seated themselves, when a loud knocking at the door gave fresh cause for alarm. Two horsemen appeared; one of whom entreated permission to shelter himself until the violence of the storm abated. Ellen turned sick, and caught hold of the woman's arm, who, however, attributing her emotion to the effect of the storm, hastened to give entrance to the strangers.

It was lord Edwin, who no sooner beheld

beheld Ellen, pale, trembling, and ready to fall from her chair, than flying towards her, he caught her passionately to his bosom, and warmly expressed his gratitude to Heaven that she was safe.

“Chance,” said he, “conducted me to the inn where Courteney lays ill; I heard of your determination to proceed unprotected, and instantly followed you through the forest. On my way I was attacked, robbed, and slightly wounded; but, thank God, *you* escaped.”

He then pulled off his coat, and Ellen saw the sleeve of his shirt stained with blood. Her own receded to her heart, and she fainted in the arms of Naomi.

On recovering, she found herself supported by lord Edwin, whose eyes were fixed on her with unutterable fondness. “Adored Ellen!” said he, again pressing her to his breast; “suffer me to speak to you for a few minutes alone. All the happiness of my future life rests on this moment.”

The

The young woman who belonged to the farm now withdrew with Naomi; and Ellen, who had not yet perfectly recovered from her late severe indisposition at the Castle, awaited silently and anxiously for an explanation from lord Edwin.

“By the love you once bore me,” said the young lord, much agitated, “I conjure you, Ellen, not to drive me to distraction; I adore you—I cannot live without you. Oh! do not punish *one* fault, *one* offence, of which I am sincerely penitent, with your eternal displeasure. Be generous, my beloved Ellen; forgive those detested words, and honour me by consenting to become my wife.”

“*One* fault, my lord! and have I only *one* fault to excuse? What brings you here, so far distant from your uncle’s? not chance. Surely you do not think me so weak as to believe that you were not made acquainted with the letter I received, and which has occasioned this journey.

journey. Oh ! if indeed it came from home, do not, I beseech you, detain me from flying to my sick mother. If it did not, there is still the greatest necessity that I should expedite my departure. Pardon me, my lord, but I fear your present conduct is still *less* excuseable than your former."

Lord Edwin changed colour—"Whatever may be my errors," he replied, "they now arise from my passion for yourself. I would fain make you mine by honourable means; but, Ellen, if you persist in refusing to be my wife, dread the consequences. I will not become the laughing-stock of those who are wiser than myself."

Ellen started as if she had been stung by a viper.

"Oh, how I pity you, lord Edwin!" she cried, in a voice of the sweetest compassion; "how I lament, from my soul, that the original goodness of your nature should be so perverted, by the artful

ful

ful insinuation and cowardly depravity of him who governs you with despotic authority. How can you expect me to give my hand to *you*—to become *your* wife? Can I serve two masters?—can I obey you and your preceptor at the same time? Well may you blush, my lord, at the meanness you have been deluded into—at the *second* insult offered to one who was under the protection of your family.—Oh, my lord! confess, confess; was not the letter a forgery, to get me from the Castle, and from those who would not have suffered me to be injured, without punishing the offender? Your confusion, my lord, betrays that you are not quite perfect in your lessons.”

“Ellen,” replied lord Edwin, recovering from his embarrassment, “I shall not reply to your question, or satisfy your suspicions; were they true, Courteney is not to blame. I only am in fault. Yet, do not expect to leave this
house

house to night. I have sent back my uncle's carriage to the inn. To-morrow I will myself conduct you to the Parsonage."

Ellen rose with an air of dignified pride—" 'Tis well, my lord," said she; "the little share you yet retained of my former affection is now lost for ever; even my pity is fast diminishing; and contempt and indignation alone remain in a heart once entirely yours. I know not by what authority you act, or what right you have to detain me against my will. I wish, however, to retire, since this house is to be my prison for to-night. To-morrow, lord Edwin, you will see me safe to my mother's."

"Oh, let us not part in anger, Ellen! A time *may* come, when you will think of me less harshly than at present. Have I not offered to make you my wife? what more can I do to prove the strength of my passion?"

"What more, indeed!" said Ellen contemptuously.

temptuously. "When you have conveyed me to the Parsonage, my lord, you shall not complain of either mine or my family's gratitude."

Ellen now called Naomi, and desired her to tell the farmer's wife that she wished to be shewn to her chamber. Lord Edwin followed her with his eyes, half repenting the line of conduct he had been advised to pursue, and astonished at the spirit she had shewn, as well as the suspicions she had betrayed of being deceived. She was now completely in his power, since she could not escape. The night was still stormy, and no conveyance at hand; yet he determined to sit up, and watch, lest by some unknown means she should elude his arms.

It was very far from the intentions of lord Edwin to restore Ellen to her friends. He had ordered a coach and four to be in readiness by six in the morning; and instead of conveying her
to

to the Parsonage, it was meant to carry her to London, where, in spite of all the remonstrances of Courteney, he determined to marry her; thinking that, to save her own character from reproach, she would not refuse his proposal, when once he had succeeded in taking her so far distant from her family.

The illness of Courteney was only a feigned one, as he wished not to appear to be accessory to her ruin; for little did he conceive that his pupil still secretly resolved to marry the object of his malice. He had copied so exactly the handwriting of Fanny Woodville, that Ellen had no suspicion that it was not actually written by her sister. By his advice, lord Edwin, who had confided to him the result of his interview with Ellen in the temple, was induced to quit the Castle, under a pretence of joining the Lisburnes, who were to be absent a week or ten days; and in the mean time, Ellen was to be conveyed to London; while

D 2

Courteney

Courteney meant to return to the Castle, as soon as he heard from his pupil of the accomplishment of his wishes.

The postillion to whose care Ellen was committed was not in the secret of the plot against her. He had received orders from Leopold to go through the forest, and to strike into a path to the right, which would have brought them into the high road; and it was here that lord Edwin, who, with his man Simpson, had arrived before them at the inn, was to have joined the carriage, as if by accident. John, however, missed the path, and kept straight on, to the no small vexation of lord Edwin, who followed slowly behind, debating how he might remedy this unlucky mistake. He had been in reality attacked, and wounded slightly in the left arm, although the violence of the tempest prevented the report of the pistol from being heard by Ellen, or her timid companion. Nothing now remained for him to do but to send
away

away the carriage with a message to Courteney, and to remain all night at the farm, and put up with its accommodations, were they ever so humble.

Fortunately for Ellen, she possessed an exterior which never failed to charm the most uncultivated mind ; her face, her voice, stole into the heart of the humblest cottager, and they now pleaded most powerfully for her in the bosom of the farmer's wife, who, after shewing her and Naomi to a small neat chamber, made many apologies for not having a better room to offer her, and one to herself, for as she had but that spare bed, Naomi would be obliged to sleep with her mistress. She left them to prepare a slight repast, which Ellen requested might be served in her own apartment.

“ Oh, my dear, dear Miss Ellen !” cried Naomi, “ did I not tell you I was afraid we should not see the Parsonage to-night ? See here are our trunks ; and Simpson, whom I saw while you were

speaking to his master, told me that a coach was ordered to be here before six in the morning—‘To carry us,’ said I, ‘to the Parsonage, I hope.’ He laughed—‘You will see, Naomi,’ said he; ‘you and your mistress are in good hands, and shall not have cause to complain of ill usage.’ I am sure, Miss Ellen, that his laugh meant us no good.”

“I fear not, indeed, Naomi; we must escape from this house to-night, if we would avoid a still greater evil. The rain has ceased, and the moon already begins to shine with her accustomed beauty.”

“I still hear the distant thunder,” replied Naomi, “and it continues to lighten fast. Oh, Miss Ellen! how can we get away? Of course, my lord and Simpson will be on the watch; and besides, we know not a step of the way—and might be robbed and murdered. Pray do not be offended with me; but I always thought lord Edwin loved you

too dearly to alarm and terrify you in this manner. I am sure I see no reason why he should not marry you, Miss Ellen, without running away with you."

"I have declined the honour of his lordship's hand, Naomi; that is, most likely, the cause of his seeking to persecute me."

"*Refuse lord Edwin Wilmington!*" exclaimed Naomi, with a look and gesture that made her young mistress smile—"refuse to marry a *lord*, and one so handsome, and so sweet tempered! Well, after that, Miss Ellen, I can believe any thing."

The farmer's wife now appeared, and spread the cloth on the only table the room contained. Looking respectfully at Ellen, she said—"This is but a poor place, madam, for a lady like you to eat and sleep in; though I and my husband live very happily in it, and are glad to have so good a one, yet to you, and the young lord below, it must seem a wretched hovel."

“No, indeed,” replied Ellen, with one of her fascinating smiles; “every thing is so clean and neat about your house, that I should admire it more, did the state of my mind allow of my being comfortable; but I am too unhappy in being detained here against my will, while my dear mother is perhaps languishing on the bed of death, and anxiously looking forward to my arrival.”

“Dear heart! that is a sad thing, indeed,” said the woman. “I should cry the eyes out of my head if my poor mother was ill, and I could not see her.”

“Oh, my good creature,” replied Ellen, catching hold of her hand, “what must I feel then, who am fearful that, by to-morrow night, I shall be deluded away many miles still farther from home! If you could but assist me in getting away from the gentleman below, you would eternally oblige me, and my whole family; nor should I forget to reward you for your goodness.”

“Speak

“Speak low,” said the farmer’s wife, “lest we should be overheard by the young lord. His servant told me that you were engaged to marry his master, but that you had changed your mind all of a sudden; and that they were not going to do you any harm, only that my lord was determined to make you keep your word; for it was well known how dearly you loved him, although you might chuse to seem otherwise.”

“It is no matter what his servant said,” replied Ellen; “I was returning home with all possible haste, on hearing that my dear mother was ill, when his master overtook me here; and I have every reason to believe does not intend to return me to my friends. If you could help me to quit your house, unknown to him who now detains me, I might, perhaps, find shelter in some cottage, until a conveyance could be procured to carry me and my maid safe home to the village of——, where my family reside.”

“ God bless me !” cried the young woman, “ do you live there ? Then you know, I dare say, one sir Godfrey Louvaine ; my sister is lady’s-maid to his daughter, who was married not long ago to the marquis of Wilmington ; and mother and father still live with sir Godfrey : father is head gardener, and mother takes care of the poultry and the dairy.”

“ What, honest old Jonathan Watson ?” said Ellen ; “ many a nosegay has he got ready for me, against I called on his young ladies ; they are my particular friends, and in serving me, you would oblige them. My name is Woodville, and I live at the Parsonage, which, you know, is very near to sir Godfrey’s.”

“ Oh, I know it well !” exclaimed the woman ; “ it is one of the sweetest places in the world. My life on it, you are Miss Ellen, that I have heard so much of. Well, God bless and preserve you from all harm, and all wicked young noblemen ! I will do all I can to get you
out

out of his power, and I am sure my husband will do the same ; but we have no house near us, except the great one which is about a mile and a half off ; it belongs to one doctor Bennet, and if his nephew is at home, I can soon get a carriage to take you to the Parsonage. Mr. Deloraine is one of the best men in the world, and would go a hundred miles to do a kind action."

"Deloraine !" exclaimed Ellen, with surprise and pleasure ; "does Mr. Deloraine live so near you ? oh, my good creature, contrive some means to convey a note to him from me immediately. I can get out of this window, it is so near the ground ; and with his assistance, I shall be restored to my dear mother."

Ellen tore a leaf out of her pocket-book, and wrote with a pencil the following lines :—

"Ellen Woodville, the friend
of lady Caroline Wilmington, for whom

the duke of Fitz-Aubin felt so much interested, is now detained at the farm in the forest, against her inclination. She fears more than she dares express, and requests the immediate assistance of Mr. Deloraine to free her from her prison, and restore her to her family."

The wife of the farmer now undertook to get this conveyed either to Mr. Deloraine or his uncle, and went down to speak to her husband. Lord Edwin eagerly inquired after his lovely prisoner, and heard that she was much fatigued by her journey, and was going to bed.

"I will make her some egg wine," said she, "if our hens have laid any eggs." Then taking a light, she winked at her husband, who followed her out of the room into the hen-house, and who readily consented to carry the letter with all possible expedition, and to give it himself to Mr. Deloraine or the doctor. His wife returned, made the wine, and took it

it up to Ellen, who, thanking her for her kindness, obliged her to accept a five-pound note as a remuneration for the trouble she had occasioned her; requesting her to send her trunks as soon as possible to the Parsonage—"And now, my good creature," said Ellen, "tell me how I am to act, after I get out of the window. I hope the sound of my footsteps will not be heard?"

"They cannot," replied the woman; "for this room is away from that in which the gentleman and his servant are now talking; the window is very low, and you can drop down into the garden. Go straight down it, till you come to a gate; my husband has unlocked it; you will then pass into a field; keep in the trodden path; it will lead you into a lane, at the end of which is the road through which the carriage must pass."

"Thank you, thank you!" cried Ellen, embracing her; "I will endeavour to reward your goodness.—Come, Naomi, follow

follow me courageously, and we shall soon be free from our enemies."

"Let me go down," said the farmer's wife, "a few stairs, and listen if they are in the room below, before you get out. I left my lord at supper, and his man was waiting on him.—They are still talking," said she, returning; "you cannot have a better opportunity. God bless you, and send you safe home!"

Ellen in a moment was out of the window; her light foot was scarcely to be heard: Naomi followed with a trembling heart, and with her mistress scarcely breathed until they had gained the end of the lane. Here they paused to recover themselves, and to listen if they were pursued. Naomi had luckily taken out a velvet mantle, which she wrapped round Ellen, to shield her from the damp night air; but her thin shoes and silk stockings were completely wet in passing through the fields, and she felt the sudden chill affect her limbs, as she
leaned

leaned for support on the arm of her affectionate attendant.

At length the rapid sound of wheels was heard; and Ellen's heart throbbed as they approached nearer and nearer. A chariot now appeared, out of which leaped hastily a gentleman, whom Ellen immediately knew to be the husband of the deceased countess. His handsome features were animated with the pleasure of seeing her. Lifting her into the carriage with Naomi, he placed himself between them, and taking the cold trembling hands of Ellen, he warmed them between his own; while she, from an unaccountable feeling, did not attempt to withdraw them.

"Never again," said he, "will I accuse Fortune of being capricious in the distribution of her favours, since she has made choice of me as the instrument of assisting you to regain your family. Dearest Miss Woodville! I cannot express what I feel upon the occasion. I thought

my gratitude to Fitz-Aubin could not increase, but I now find my error, since to him I owe the confidence which made you apply to me in your distress. Blessed for ever be the ways of Providence, who made me the highly-favoured being destined to be of service to you! Suffer me to conduct you to my uncle, who is already apprised of your letter. You will want a few hours rest before you set out on your journey. I will myself have the happiness of restoring you to your mother and family."

Ellen tried to thank him; but the cold had so sensibly affected her, that she could only assent to his kind offer. Her teeth chattered; and her whole body was visibly agitated; nor was poor Naomi much better, who felt truly rejoiced to be taken into the housekeeper's room, where she met with every attention and kindness.

Doctor Bennet received Ellen with great tenderness, and placing her by
the

the side of a good fire, ordered a warm bed to be provided, and something proper for her to take.

“ My dear child,” said he, “ I am an old man, and able to advise you even better than my nephew. Your spirits of course have been considerably harassed, and the cold moist air of the morning, for it is near one o’clock, has chilled your delicate frame. Go to bed, my sweet child, and try to sleep soundly for six or seven hours. You are with those who are no strangers to your worth, and who will protect you from even the shadow of danger.”

“ Dear sir,” said Ellen, who could not help feeling an affection for the mild, benevolent, grey-headed old man before her, “ how much am I indebted to your kindness, and that of Mr. Deloraine, who has saved me from the artifices of those I once thought my real friends ! I hope the peculiarity of my situation will plead my excuse for the
freedom

freedom I took in addressing your nephew."

"He is much beholden to you for your good opinion," replied the doctor: "but we will not selfishly enjoy the pleasure of your conversation, at the expense of your health."

He then rang for the housekeeper, into whose care he consigned Ellen; while Deloraine, taking her hand, pressed it to his lips.

"May your slumber be sweet and unbroken," said he, "dear Miss Woodville! and may I see you to-morrow as cheerful and well as when I last beheld you, through the window of Homely Farm!"

Ellen coloured, and silently followed her venerable conductress, who led her into a chamber, where every thing had been prepared for her reception. Worn out with agitation, weakness, and fatigue, Ellen soon sunk into the slumber so much prayed for by Deloraine; and
woke

woke not until past nine o'clock the next morning. Naomi attended her summons, who, as well as her mistress, was quite recovered from the effects of the cold, and her fears lest they should be retaken.

Ellen was not long in dressing a form too beautiful by nature to require any decorations. The morning was clear after the storm; and from the windows of her bed-room, she discovered a prospect so finely diversified with woods, hills, and dales, that she could not help pausing for a few minutes to admire it; but at length recollecting that her preserver and his uncle might be waiting breakfast, she hastily descended into the parlour, where she was met by Deloraine, who led her to a seat near his uncle, and expressed his joy at beholding once more the rose upon her cheek.

“I will not ask you,” said he, “my dear Miss Woodville, the name of him from whom you were so anxious to escape;

cape ; by this time he has discovered his loss ; but I cannot help inquiring if you think that foe to innocence and virtue, that consummate hypocrite, Leopold Courteney, was the plotter of your distress ?”

Ellen replied to this question with the candour of a mind pure of itself, and loth to give credit to depravity in others.

“ You are, of course, well informed,” said she, “ of the friendly warning I received from the duke of Fitz-Aubin, in his last visit to the Castle. The solemn assurances he then gave me of Mr. Courteney’s duplicity were such as I could not disbelieve ; yet I have not been able to prove clearly that he means me any injury. I suspect, indeed,” added she, sighing, and blushing deeply, “ that he is the *adviser* of the insult I have now received ; and that the letter which purported to inform me of my dear mother’s illness was, as well as his sickness, only feigned, to deceive me ; if so, I thank God

God that I have escaped from the snare that was meant to entrap me, and that what was intended to injure, has proved the reverse, since it has made me acquainted with two characters whom I have long held in the highest veneration."

"My dearest child," said doctor Bennet, "I will compassionate your feelings, and the very natural desire you must have of being once more safe in the bosom of your own family. It is little more than eighteen miles to the village of —, and my nephew shall see you there whenever you like. I have often passed through it, but little thought the treasure it contained."

"I hope, my dear sir," cried Ellen with quickness, "that you will soon have occasion to drive that way, and that you will not fail to call at the Parsonage. You know not how glad my dear mother will be to thank you personally for the asylum you afforded her imprisoned child. I shall be happy to attend

attend Mr. Deloraine the moment it is convenient."

Doctor Bennet promised to call in the course of a few days; and his nephew now rang to order his uncle's carriage to be got ready; while Ellen, charmed by the appearance of every thing around her, could not help expressing her admiration in the terms of a painter, at the beautiful scenery which met her eye.

While the carriage was getting ready, the doctor and Deloraine conducted her over the principal apartments of the villa, which were fitted up with simple elegance, and shewed that the classic taste of Deloraine had been consulted. The grounds also evinced the same director; and both the doctor and his nephew felt gratified at the approbation she manifested.

A servant now came to tell them the chariot was waiting. Deloraine took one hand, and his uncle the other—"Dear Miss Woodville," said the latter, as they returned

returned to the house, " I should feel more regret than I now do at parting with you, did I not hope to have the happiness of seeing you again in a little time."

" And I," replied Ellen, " shall wait impatiently until I have the opportunity of introducing you to my family, and of witnessing the respect and affection each individual will be ready to shew you."

Then, pressing his hand to her lips, she vaulted into the carriage, followed by Naomi and Deloraine, whose fine blue eyes seemed to be rivetted on her, by a strong and powerful attraction.



CHAP. III.

WHEN the carriage stopped at the gate of the Parsonage, Fanny Woodville, who was impatiently waiting the arrival of
Colin

Colin Maxwell, eagerly ran to the door which opened on the lawn. Her timidity alone withheld her from going farther, to welcome her lover. No sooner did she behold the beloved features of Ellen, than, uttering a scream of joyful surprise, she flew and caught her in her arms. "It is Ellen Woodville," exclaimed Stella Maxwell, who, with Jessy, now hurried to embrace their lovely friend ; while Mrs. Woodville scarce believed what she heard, until she saw her graceful form, and felt the fond pressure of her lips to hers.

"Are you well, my dear mother, quite well? and have you not been ill, so ill as to send for me home?"

"No, my dearest child ! I have never sent for you to return ; but explain what you mean, and why you are thus unexpectedly come back, without first writing to inform us of your intention. Is Mr. Courteney with you?"

Ellen immediately recollected herself,
and

and turning to Deloraine, who was standing at the window, she took his hand, and led him to her mother—"To this gentleman," said she, "I am under the most lasting obligation, which I will inform you of at another time. It is sufficient now, my dearest mother, to assure you, that Mr. Deloraine has rescued me from the hands of those who, I fear, intended me an irreparable injury."

Mrs. Woodville gave a sudden start, and would have fallen, but for the quick assistance of Deloraine, who now supported her in his arms, while Fanny and Ellen felt considerably alarmed at her indisposition, as she was not at all subject to fainting. As soon as she recovered, Mrs. Woodville attempted to apologize to her friendly supporter, but she trembled so violently, that, had she not been relieved by a gush of tears, she would have fainted a second time.

"Do not be terrified, my dear children,"

said she ; “I am better now ; only a little surprised—a little shocked. Let me beg of you, my dear sir, to favour me with your company to-day. I am anxious to learn the extent of my obligation to you, and the reason of my dear child’s unexpected return. My son also is absent, and will not come home till late ; and I am certain it would distress him to lose the opportunity of expressing his gratitude to one who had befriended his sister.”

Deloraine willingly consented ; and Ellen, at the desire of her mother, as soon as the Miss Maxwells had left the parlour, began her narrative of all that had passed since she quitted the Parsonage. Her beautiful eyes sparkled with affection as she depicted the generous friendship and noble conduct of lady Caroline ; while her cheek assumed a deeper tint, as she found herself obliged to speak suspiciously of lord Edwin. With great delicacy she touched on the unkind jealousy of the marchioness ; but she

she felt her spirits rise indignantly, as she, in justice to them both, named Courteney as the adviser and plotter of her disgrace.

“Impossible! my beloved Ellen,” cried her mother, warmly; “he must be belied by some secret enemy. I cannot have been so grossly mistaken in a man who seemed the pattern of every virtue, who looked and spoke more like a divine than any other being. Besides, my sweet girl, did I not confide you to his paternal care? Could I repose in him a more sacred trust than that? What interest could Mr. Courteney have in turning *your* enemy, in plotting *your* ruin? You have been deceived, my Ellen, believe me.”

“ I am sorry,” replied Deloraine, “ to differ from you in opinion, my dear madam ; but, unfortunately for you, a greater villain does not exist than him who has thus, for so many years, main-

tained the character of a devout man—a good and pious Christian. It is no impeachment of your understanding that he has deceived you ; but it would be well were you the only one whom his artifice has gained over to credit his seeming humility and sincerity. Thank God, however, that your lovely child has escaped his demon-like malice—that she has not, like too many of her sex, fallen a victim to his hypocrisy and perfidy.”

“ Gracious God !” exclaimed Mrs. Woodville, raising her eyes and hands to Heaven, “ can such a being really exist ? Oh, sir ! I looked upon Mr. Courteney as one of the best of men ; I scrupled not to entrust him with some secret concerns of my family ; I hesitated not to follow implicitly his advice ; and it was owing to his suggestions that I suffered Ellen to visit Mortimer Castle. He promised me to regard her the same as if she
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were his own child, and I too fully believed him."

"It would cost him but little," replied Deloraine, "to keep *that* promise, since his wife, an amiable and inoffensive woman, with his children, he has long since abandoned; and to this hour I believe him ignorant of their fate. They must have died—have starved to death, but for the assistance of a friend, who knew and pitied their distress. I will not shock either you or these lovely girls by a repetition of his cruelty, his meanness, or his cowardice; neither will I enumerate those unfortunate and innocent women who have believed and trusted to his protestations of love and fidelity. Yet, that you may rely on the faith of my assertions, I will convince you, my dear madam, that few people are better calculated than I am to estimate the true character of Mr. Courteney, since no one can have suffered so severely from his base duplicity, his hypocritical friend-

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liness,

liness, and pretended sincerity, than I have done."

Deloraine, in as concise a manner as he could, yet not without visible agitation, recounted the treacherous part Leopold had acted towards himself and his adored Althea. The tears, the earnest attention of his hearers, and above all, the loud sobs of Ellen, spoke the sympathy his sufferings had excited.

"Sweet girl," said he, turning towards her, and taking her hand affectionately in his, "your tender pity for the untimely fate of my sainted wife operates as a balm to my still-wounded mind. My generous friend, the duke of Fitz-Aubin, was right when he passed on you the highest of all human praise—when he affirmed that *you*, and *you* only, were worthy to be compared to our mutually-beloved countess."

The fair cheek of Ellen was crimsoned by the blush of pleasure. She raised her eyes from the ground, and meeting those
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of her mother fixed on herself, with a new and mysterious expression, she hastily cast them down again.

“ You may be assured, madam,” he continued, “ that Courteney was the writer of the forged letter ; but his meaning in thus wishing to seduce away your daughter, evidently with no intention of bringing her *home*, remains to be yet explained. Perhaps he only seconded the wishes and dishonourable intentions of his pupil, lord Edwin Wilmington.”

Again the blood rushed into the face and neck of Ellen ; and she once more raised her eyes from the ground.

“ In justice to lord Edwin,” said she, in a low tremulous voice, “ I must acknowledge, my dear mother, that to *me*, he has never for a moment dared to breathe a dishonourable sentiment, and I believe, whatever may have been the counsels of his preceptor, would marry me immediately, did I but consent. At

first, indeed, he only implored me to agree to a private union ; but finding me strongly averse to such a clandestine proceeding, he would have applied to his uncle, had I not positively assured him that such an application was useless, my resolution being unalterable never to be his. Oh, my dear mother ! notwithstanding the unkindness of the marchioness, and the ill-nature of Miss Beaumont, I still possess warm and steady friends at the Castle ; both the marquis and his sister were eager to use all their interest with lord Mortimer, were even anxious that I should become one of their family, and the earl himself gave me every demonstration of esteem and tenderness."

" My beloved child," replied Mrs. Woodville, " you have not deceived me ; you have fulfilled the expectation I had formed of you ; and in refusing to consent to the entreaties of lord Edwin to become his wife by stealth, proved yourself

self worthy the confidence I placed in your discretion and prudence. Few circumstances, if any, can authorise a private marriage, and I believe but few instances occur of such marriages being happy ones. Let us, however, be grateful, my dear Ellen, that you have escaped unhurt by the treachery of that bad man, and that, through the kind assistance of Mr. Deloraine, you are once more safe within the bosom of your family."

Ellen now retired with her mother, to make some alteration in her dress, while Fanny conducted their new visitor over the fairy grounds of the Parsonage, accompanied by the sisters of her expected lover. When alone with her mother, Ellen related the friendly warning she had received from the duke of Fitz-Aubin; recapitulated the melancholy history of Deloraine and the countess of Brandon; and expatiated warmly on the noble con-

duct of the duke towards the idol of her fondest affections.

“ Oh, my mother !” she exclaimed, “ you know not the interest I have always felt for the unfortunate husband of that lovely woman. I cannot explain to you my feelings when I first beheld him and his friend at the magnificent tomb erected to the memory of his wife ; yet it is still more singular, that, on beholding me, both the duke and Mr. Deloraine should be equally affected ; and that I should also feel no hesitation in meeting the former at midnight in the chapel of the Castle, where he more fully explained his reasons for cautioning me against Mr. Courteney ; neither did I feel any scruple in applying to Mr. Deloraine, to rescue me from my imprisonment at the Farm. Had you but seen the venerable doctor Bennet, you would love him, my mother, as much as I do ; but he has promised to visit us in a few days, and
then

then you will own that he is one of the most prepossessing old men in the world."

"That is very likely, my dearest Ellen; but I regret that you should give me cause to express disapprobation at any part of your conduct. Surely, my child, your delicacy cannot itself excuse your meeting a stranger at midnight, and alone; there, Ellen, you have been to blame, and have innocently given but too much cause to have your actions misrepresented."

"I plead guilty, dear mother, in this instance; yet the duke or Mr. Deloraine were the only two beings who could thus have tempted me to violate the boundaries of female reserve. With him who had so nobly, though fruitlessly, sacrificed his own happiness to secure that of his friend, what had I to fear? At the tomb of her for whose sake he had vowed eternal celibacy, I met the friendly duke. I felt as safe, as secure, as if I had been alone with my father."

Mrs. Woodville started !

“ It might be wrong, my dear mother ; but had you heard Mrs. Mason, the faithful nurse and confidant of the countess, speak of the duke. and extol his many acts of disinterested affection, you would have done as I did. Dear old woman ! with what careful love she used to visit me every night, and sit and chat to me about the mistress she adored ! while my tears streamed with hers, at the repetition of her sufferings, and of the untimely fate of the countess and her infant. Do you know, my dear mother, that the apartments which were allotted for me were those which belonged to the countess, during her confinement at the Castle. It was here she was once more blessed with the sight of her husband, and her adopted brother, the duke of Fitz-Aubin. By means of a fisherman’s boat and a rope-ladder, Mr. Deloraine ascended to the high window of her chamber, and enjoyed the conversation
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of his imprisoned wife—but short was their happiness! The lovely countess died, after being delivered of a dead infant; and her doting husband was thus suddenly deprived at once of all he valued—all he held dear.”

Ellen paused, to wipe away her tears; then went on—“Poor old Mrs. Mason used to delight in talking to me of her beloved lady; I slept in the same bed on which the countess had breathed her last. She shewed me also the zig-zag cut in the crimson velvet curtain, which had been made by the doctor who attended her mistress, and to whose care was also entrusted the body of her lifeless babe—But, good Heaven! my mother, what is the matter?” exclaimed Ellen, in an agony of terror; “my mother! my dear mother! alas, she hears me not!”

Ellen's screams brought to her assistance Naomi, and another of the servants; Mrs. Woodville slowly recovered—and
pressing

pressing the weeping Ellen to her maternal bosom, bid her not be alarmed.

“ Let me send for advice, my dear mother. I entreat,” said her daughter; “ this is the third time you have fainted this morning. I shall be miserable—indeed I shall, if you do not have doctor Hammond.”

“ My beloved Ellen, I am better now; I shall not faint again, my child. When your brother returns, I will account for my indisposition. Leave me, dear Ellen; I will lie down for a little while, and try to compose myself. Go to Mr. Deloraine; *he* is intimately concerned with my present agitation.”

Ellen obeyed, yet not without feeling much surprised at the unexpected and strange emotion betrayed by her mother. At dinner, Mrs. Woodville appeared to have recovered her accustomed ease and cheerfulness; and proposed that her daughters and Miss Maxwells should entertain

ertain Deloraine with their musical talents, while she walked to sir Godfrey's, in order to prepare them for the return of Ellen.

In less than an hour, Dora Louvaine was in the arms of her lovely friend, who felt no small degree of pleasure at witnessing the unchanged affection of the marchioness's sister. Mrs. Woodville brought a pressing invitation from sir Godfrey (who was prevented from accompanying his daughter to the Parsonage, by another attack of the gout), for the whole party, including Deloraine, to go the Hall to tea. Leaving, therefore, in case of the arrival of captain Maxwell, a note to desire him to follow them, they all prepared to gratify the wish of sir Godfrey. James Woodville soon joined them; he had learnt from Naomi the agreeable intelligence of his youngest sister being so near him. Embracing her tenderly, he expressed his delight at her presence, and testified the most lively
gratitude

gratitude to Deloraine the moment he was informed of the obligation he owed him.

During the various rambles of the melancholy husband of the countess, he had never met with a family in which *every* individual was so highly interesting as those at the Parsonage; and he anticipated, with a rapture long unknown to him, the many happy hours he should derive from so desirable a connection.

The next morning after breakfast, Mrs. Woodville requested her children to remain, as she had something which she wished to communicate to them. Deloraine and the Miss Maxwells were going to retire, but she prevented them, saying that what she had to narrate materially concerned her new guest; and that, as the Miss Maxwells would soon be more nearly related to her, she wished them to stay and partake of the joyful surprise which awaited one to whom they were much attached. All the company, not
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the least anxious of whom was Deloraine, now seated themselves near Mrs. Woodville, who, after pausing for some minutes, thus began:—

“ Sixteen years ago last August, my dear Mr. Woodville and myself were sent for, express, by his father, who was dying. I was then very near being confined; and yet so desirous of seeing the old gentleman, that, contrary to my husband’s inclinations, I accompanied him a journey of several miles, and had the mortification to arrive too late—his father had breathed his last. On our return, I was taken suddenly ill, and obliged to stop at a small house at the verge of a heath, distant about five miles from the nearest village. Here I received every attention and kindness for the fortnight I was compelled to remain: our impatience to return home, made us anxious to undertake the journey as soon as I could bear the motion of the carriage.

“ The evening before the day fixed on
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for our departure, Mr. Woodville received a visit from a stranger, a venerable-looking old man, who was thrown from his horse facing our abode, and who, on learning the profession of my dear husband, applied to him for his assistance, in an affair of great consequence and secrecy. Mr. Woodville hesitated to follow him, under the necessary restrictions which were imposed on him; but I, thinking that the life of a fellow-creature was at stake, entreated him to consent, and he accompanied the stranger blindfolded to the residence of his master.

“As soon as the bandage was taken from his eyes, he found himself in a magnificent suit of apartments, where every thing around him bespoke the rank and splendour of the owner. The features of the lady whose situation required his skill were concealed from him; but he determined to possess himself, if possible, of some trifle, which should lead to a discovery of the mystery which evidently hung
over

over the fate of the sufferer, and her unborn infant. No signs of life appearing when the child was born, it was wrapped in a mantle, and delivered to his care, to be disposed of privately; and he was hurried out of the house by the same old man, who, trusting to his honour, quitted him long before he had reached my temporary habitation."

Deloraine was now greatly agitated; and Ellen trembled, though she knew not why. "Proceed, my dearest madam, I conjure you," said he; "what became of the dead infant? Did you ever find out the name of its parents?"

"Not until *very lately*," replied Mrs. Woodville. "During my husband's attendance on the noble unknown, he contrived to cut from the curtain of the bed on which she lay, a piece of such a form as could not easily be replaced without its being seen; he also fortunately picked up a miniature, which had evidently fallen from the neck of the lady,
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and which puts it beyond a doubt who she really was."

"My dear mother," hastily exclaimed Ellen, "it must have been the countess of Brandon that my father attended, for what you have just repeated corresponds with Mrs. Mason's story."

Deloraine groaned in an agony of recollected woe.

"*It was*, my dearest Ellen. Here," she continued, producing the picture and the zig-zag piece of crimson velvet, "are convincing proofs of its being the wife of your preserver, to whose assistance Mr. Woodville was called in."

Ellen took the miniature; it was that of Deloraine—it wore the air, the smile, of happiness and love. She pressed it to her lips; then, blushing deeply, gave it to the agitated husband of the countess. The tears rushed into the eyes of Deloraine, as he gazed with saddened fondness on this once-treasured trinket of his Althea, as he remembered with what
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doting tenderness she had always worn it in her bosom.

Overcome by his emotions, he was rising to leave the room, when Mrs. Woodville took his hand, and gently detained him—"It was *your* infant, my dear sir, that Mr. Woodville, on his return, presented to me; are you not solicitous to learn what became of it?"

"Oh, my dear madam!" he replied, in a tremulous voice, "it has been a constant source of inquietude to me, that I could never discover where the precious pledge of my Althea's love was disposed of. *You* can remove this cause of regret; and our dear infant shall now be laid in the same tomb with its sainted mother."

"I hope never to live to see that day," replied Mrs. Woodville. "You look surprised, my dear sir; but you will be still more so when I tell you that your dear babe was not dead, as Mr. Woodville
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ville at first suspected ; it lived and breathed when he placed it in my arms."

She paused, much affected by the remembrance of that moment of benevolent transport ; while Deloraine gasped for breath, and sunk on his knees before her, incapable of giving utterance to his feelings.

Mrs. Woodville with difficulty continued—" Rise, my dear sir ; the secret impulses of NATURE are never to be restrained. My own daughter was only a fortnight old, when yours was sent me by Providence, to be the blessing of my existence. Look around you, my dear sir, and claim your child ; she cannot be more dear to you than she is to me."

Deloraine, almost fainting with unexpected bliss, rose slowly, and opening his arms, Ellen rushed into them. Both sunk on the ground, overcome by surprise and joy ; while Mrs. Woodville, Fanny, and the Miss Maxwells, hung weeping

weeping over them. Deloraine first recovered, and clasping his new-found treasure to his heart, exclaimed, while the tears rolled down his cheeks—"Father of mercy ! what am I, that thou shouldst thus unexpectedly make me the happiest of men?—Oh, my Althea, my wife, my murdered angel ! thy Ellen is worthy to be called thy daughter !"

Again embracing his child with unutterable fondness, he said—"My Ellen, join with me in thanking your best friend for her maternal care and solicitude. To her are you indebted for all the virtues and accomplishments you possess.—Never, while I have life, my dear madam, can I repay your tenderness to my deserted infant ; she alone is capable of making you amends."

Ellen quitted the arms of her father for those of Mrs. Woodville, who folded her to her bosom. "My mother, my dear adopted mother !" said Ellen, sobbing,

bing, "the happy discovery of this morning only binds me more firmly to you, and my dear supposed brothers and sister. My full heart would fain express its gratitude, its unalterable love; but, dearest mother, you must trust to my future actions—not to the present moment."

"Oh, my beloved Ellen," replied Mrs. Woodville, "never did I feel so proud as at this instant, when I can restore you to your excellent father, every thing that his most sanguine wishes could hope—when I can affirm that you will reflect honour on the noble family that you were *born* to make one of, and that you will add a lustre to the rank and wealth of your ancestors."

Ellen now flung her white arms round the neck of Fanny, who still continued sobbing; while James Woodville, taking her hand, embraced them both.

"Dearest Ellen," said he, "the fortunate disclosure of your superior rank affords me the highest gratification, since
I feel

I feel assured that my mother will yet retain a daughter, and I a sister whom I have always fondly loved. Dry your tears, my Fanny, and join me in congratulating our Ellen on her good fortune."

Fanny raised her head, and kissed the moist cheek of her supposed sister, who, after she had returned her caresses, flew to receive again those of the transported Deloraine.

After their mutual rapture had a little subsided, he said—"I can now account for the strange and mysterious attraction which dwells in the form and features of my Ellen, and which was felt by Fitz-Aubin as well as myself."

"And I, dear father," replied Ellen, "for the emotions of Mrs. Mason—for the confidence I placed in the generous duke—and the inexpressible agitation and more than sympathy I felt at seeing you one night—the night of my birth, at the tomb of my ever-loved, ever-lamented mother."

“ And I,” cried Mrs. Woodville, “ now fully comprehend the cause of Mr. Courteney’s hatred and malignity, since it was the secret of your birth that I confided to his treacherous bosom, with my earnest request that he would try to find out your family. I shewed him the miniature of your father, which immediately betrayed to him your relationship.”

“ Inhuman villain !” exclaimed Deloraine ; “ have sixteen years elapsed since the death of my adored Althea, and has not his vengeance been satisfied ? Must his envy and malice extend to her innocent offspring ? But his reign is over ; his sun is set, never to rise again. Your birth must be proved, my child, and your right acknowledged ; the day that sees you reinstated in your mother’s title and estates, will be a gloomy one for him.”

“ I have preserved two other documents more than those I mentioned,” said Mrs. Woodville, “ which may be of service

service in this affair. The one is a white satin mantle, richly embroidered, in which our Ellen was wrapped ; the other, the bank-note which Mr. Woodville received for his assistance ; it has two initials on it, probably written by some person who gave it to lord Mortimer. The people of the house where my Fanny was born knew of the infant which Mr. Woodville brought home with him. Fanny could not be mistaken for Ellen, since the former has on her right shoulder a plain mark of a strawberry, and strongly resembles her brothers ; while Ellen's transparent skin, and bright blue eyes, have often excited the wonder of our friends. As soon as we returned to our own house, I and Mr. Woodville acquainted the clergyman of our parish with the circumstance ; he is still living at the rectory, and ready to vouch for the truth of what I utter. But Ellen's self, placed by your side, is sufficient

proof of her relationship ; her eyes alone betray *who* is her *father* !”

When the whole party were recovered from their first surprise, Deloraine dispatched a letter to his uncle, requesting his immediate presence at the Parsonage, where he had no sooner arrived, than the happy intelligence of Ellen's birth was made known to him, and he joined in the general pleasure of the whole family. Another letter was sent off to the duke of Fitz-Aubin, whom Deloraine desired to meet him on such a day at Homely Farm ; disclosing at the same time the delightful reason of his visit to that place.

Ellen, the first opportunity, followed Fanny to her chamber, where, throwing her arms affectionately round her, she said—“ My beloved sister, for such I shall ever call you, what will our Theodore say to this new discovery ? will he not rejoice at my accession to that fortune

tune which will enable me to provide handsomely for all this dear, dear family? Do you think, Fanny, he will refuse to leave the army, at my earnest solicitations, and bless us all by living contentedly among us?"

"I know not indeed, Ellen," replied Fanny, "what effect it will have on Theodore; but I confess that, though it may appear very selfish in me, I cannot help lamenting your exaltation, which will separate us at a time when I had promised myself so much happiness. Colin's aunt is dead, and he has resigned his commission; I expect him every hour; and meant to have celebrated our nuptials as soon as you had returned from the Castle. But now, my Ellen, it will be necessary for you to set out very soon from the Parsonage, to prove your birth-right; and we may not meet again for a long while."

"Dearest Fanny!" cried Ellen, "I admit of no claim that can interfere with

my love for you; I look forward with rapture to my being acknowledged as the daughter of the countess; not from motives of pride, Fanny, but affection and gratitude; although we have always lived genteelly: yet *now* I shall be enabled to add to the income of my dear mother—to the fortune of my Fanny—to make James more upon an equality with Dora Louvaine.”

“ While she was speaking, they heard the voice of Colin Maxwell on the stairs, and Fanny ran to meet him, followed by Ellen, who received his second kiss, as he took a hand of each, and led them into the parlour. Mrs. Woodville soon informed him of the change which had taken place in the circumstances of Ellen.

“ Write, my dear Colin,” said she, “ to Theodore. I am anxious that he should be informed of it immediately; and you are more collected just now than any of us.—Ellen, although you cannot present to your father your favourite brother,
yet

yet you can shew him his picture. Go, my child, and fetch it."

Ellen willingly obeyed ; she unlocked the cabinet in which Mrs. Woodville hoarded up what she most valued, and taking from it the miniature of Theodore, gazed on it with an increase of tenderness, as she remembered that she would soon possess the power of raising his fortune in life. The jet-black eyes seemed to regard her with all the fondness of the original. Each handsome feature was expressive of the affectionate disposition of the young soldier. " Ah ! " sighed Ellen, " such are the looks of lord Edwin, but not such the heart ! Oh, what a pity that they should smile only to betray ! "

Ellen presented the picture of her beloved Theodore to her father. A blush crimsoned her fair cheek, as she said—
" When you look on this, my father, you will see the counterpart of lord Edwin

Wilmington. Alas ! that the resemblance should only extend to the person, not the mind, of lady Caroline's brother !”

Deloraine heard the sigh, and saw the blush of Ellen, with the natural anxiety of a parent ; yet he did not appear to notice either, but passed a just encomium on the manly beauties before him.

“ I shall allow myself to hope, my dear sir,” said Mrs. Woodville, “ that, in the course of two months, I shall be able to introduce my son to your friendship. I assure you he will not prove unworthy of it.”

“ No indeed,” hastily exclaimed Colin Maxwell ; “ a braver man, a truer friend, or a more polished gentleman, does not exist than Theodore Woodville. I should be truly sorry were I to suppose that he would remain in the regiment, now that I have left it, since his brother officers are not calculated to be companions for a mind like his. I am in
great

great hopes that we shall see him in November, and that he will exchange or purchase into the Guards."

"And I," said Ellen with quickness, "have the vanity to trust that my persuasions will influence him to quit entirely the army, and make my dear mother happy by his presence at home."

Mrs. Woodville, who comprehended the generous meaning of Ellen, was silent; but captain Maxwell expressed his wishes to be the same as those of Ellen.

No one more sincerely rejoiced at the rank of Deloraine's newly-discovered daughter than sir Godfrey and Dora Louvaine. The latter had always loved her most steadily, and now felt her admiration increased by the kind intentions of Ellen in her favour.

"My dearest friend!" said Dora, "I am grateful for your attention to my happiness, but, I have reason to believe that sir Godfrey generously intends to bestow me on James, the same day as

Fanny is to be married to Colin Maxwell ; and that he means also to surprise my sister by the intelligence of the double-wedding, when it is over."

" Oh, how happy it will make me !" replied Ellen ; " my felicity would be complete, were but Theodore here to partake of it. I anticipate, likewise, the generous pleasure which will be felt by lady Caroline, as soon as our relationship is made public. She possesses the same noble liberality of soul as the marquis, who will be the first, I am confident, to welcome my return to the Castle."

" I must plead for my sister," replied Dora Louvaine, " since I am well assured that she would never have suspected *you* were capable of trifling with her husband, unless that wicked man—that vile hypocrite, Mr. Courteney, had taken great pains to make her believe so. She will be truly sorry for her unkindness, and ready to make every possible atonement."

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“ The marchioness,” said Ellen, whose cheek was suffused with the blush of offended dignity, “ could not have wounded me more deeply than she has done : yet, a kind word, or any appearance of contrition, on her part, will be sufficient reparation for the injurious insult she bestowed.”

“ And can a heart like yours, my friend, refuse its pardon for the errors committed by love, when it so generously excuses those of friendship ?” inquired Miss Louvaine.

Ellen smiled, but it was the smile of momentary anguish—“ Were it *possible*, Dora, for me to prove capricious and inconstant, or James to deceive and trifle with your affections, which would *you* be most inclined to forgive—which could you receive again into your confidence ? Not James ; no, Dora—*a breach of faith in love proves an eternal one*. Lord Edwin’s duplicity, his want of candour, his dread of offending his tutor, and his

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cowardly denial of his real feelings, prove the only alloy to my present happiness. Yet, think not, my dear friend, that I am inclined to yield to this cruel disappointment, or to sour my future years by discontent. Much as I regret that his lordship has fallen short of my expectations, yet I bless Heaven, that I discovered his weakness before it had power to affect the peace of my whole life, which would have been the case had I consented to lord Edwin's entreaties to become his wife."

Dora Louvaine was too much attached to Ellen not to feel the insult she had received; yet faithful and affectionate herself, and compassionate to the feelings of others, she could not help pitying lord Edwin, as the tool of Courteney, and secretly hoping that her lovely friend might, one day or other, be brought to overlook an error which his implicit obedience to the will of his preceptor could alone palliate.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

DELORAINE, amid the unexpected happiness thus suddenly bestowed on him, forgot not to testify the most lively gratitude to Mrs. Woodville and her amiable children. He allowed himself a week to stay at the Parsonage, during which time the adopted mother of his Ellen made the necessary arrangements for her intended visit to the Castle. Doctor Bennet had so won upon the younger part of the family, that they petitioned him to remain with them during the absence of Mrs. Woodville, to which he good-naturedly consented, much to the satisfaction of that lady, who felt particularly gratified by the high encomiums passed on the care and education she had bestowed on the sweet girl, whom she had cherished with all the fond partiality of a parent. She had written to the clergyman

man an account of the discovery which had been made of Ellen's birth, and he very kindly offered, if necessary, to attend and prove that she was the re-animated infant, which had passed for the twin sister of Fanny Woodville.

It was now the beginning of October, when Ellen, accompanied by her father and Mrs. Woodville, set off once more to re-enter the walls of Mortimer Castle. They travelled in doctor Benner's carriage; Naomi and another female servant occupying the dicky; while honest Jem Homely followed on horseback, ignorant as yet of the near relationship between his beloved master and Ellen. It was the close of a beautiful autumnal day that they arrived at Homely Farm, where every thing was in readiness for their reception. Deloraine conducted Mrs. Woodville and Ellen to their chamber, from the window of which he had first beheld his child. Here the weary travellers gladly partook of some of
dinner

dame Homely's best tea, and proposed to remain for that night, deferring their visit to the Castle until the next morning.

They had hardly finished making some alteration in their dress, when Deloraine flew to meet the chariot of his friend, the duke of Fitz-Aubin; and Ellen's grateful heart longed to express its obligation for his inestimable kindness to her father. Scarcely touching the stairs by which he ascended, the duke rushed into the apartment which contained the daughter of his beloved countess. He would have flung himself at her feet, had not Ellen prevented him. Taking his hand, she pressed it to her lips; her blue eyes, and heavenly features, expressed all that her soul felt; and the duke, sanctioned by the looks of Deloraine, folded her, in speechless tenderness, to his bosom.

"Was I not right, my dear friend," said he, a little recovered from his agitation,

tation, “ when I endeavoured to describe to you my feelings on first beholding your lovely child ? Oh, I could not be mistaken: although unconscious of the strong claim she had on my affections, yet my heart involuntarily sprang towards her. It was Ellen, the daughter of our mutually-adored Althea, that was alone capable of exciting such emotions.”

“ I fear,” said Ellen modestly, “ that your grace will deem me but an ungrateful girl ; yet I have so many favours to thank you for, so many acts of kindness to acknowledge, that I believe I must entreat you to give credit to all that *I ought* to express, since I find myself incapable of giving utterance to my gratitude. I beseech your grace to think, that while I exist, I shall ever retain the most lasting veneration, the warmest affection, for the faithful and tender friend of my mother, and the preserver of my dear father’s peace—nay, life !”

Deloraine

Deloraine took a hand of each, and clasped them together—"Beloved Fitz-Aubin!" he cried; "this treasured gift of Heaven is sent to reward all our past sufferings and privations. In Ellen's company, we shall retaste the happiness we once enjoyed in that of her sainted mother. Oh, my child! your father is indebted to this matchless friend for all the comforts he has since known. Dearest Ellen, you must now divide your affection between us; I ask you not to love me better—only as well as Fitz-Aubin."

"Most willingly, my father," replied Ellen, her whole form animated by love and gratitude. "I shall esteem myself the most fortunate of beings, if I can contribute to the happiness of the duke of Fitz-Aubin."

His grace raised her soft hand to his lips, and Ellen felt that he was deservying of all that she could either do or say to promote *his* comfort, who had so generously studied hers.

They

They now indulged in the freedom of unrestrained conversation, in which Mrs. Woodville took a part; and the duke offered to go with them next morning to the Castle, as Deloraine still continued firm in his adherence to his word.

“Little did I imagine,” said he, “that it would ever be in the power of lord Mortimer to restore to me *one* of the adored beings he had robbed me of. He must, however, acknowledge *my* child as the countess of Brandon, and bestow on her the rights and privileges of her mother, before I enter within his roof. To you, my dear Fitz-Aubin, and to her best friend, Mrs. Woodville, I consign our Ellen. Should the earl be averse from giving credit to the story of her birth, do not allow her to remain at the Castle. The wisdom and justice of our constitution will, in that case, protect her, and force him to perform what his pride, more than any thing else, may teach him to refuse.”

“I am

“I am a little curious to know what line of conduct Mr. Courteney will adopt,” said Mrs. Woodville. “Surely he will not have the hardened effrontery to appear innocent of his pupil’s intentions?”

“He is capable of that, and every thing,” replied Deloraine; “but if lord Mortimer acts as he ought to do, my first entrance into the Castle will be a fatal one to Leopold Courteney!”

“Risk not your valuable life, my dear friend,” cried the duke, “for one so worthless as his. The discovery of his hypocrisy and treachery, and the disgrace it will bring upon him, will be sufficient punishment.”

“Fear not for me,” exclaimed the injured husband of the countess; “Courteney is too great a coward to fight a duel; nor would that be sufficient atonement for my injuries. Unless he continues to vent his malevolence against my Ellen, I shall leave him to the stings of
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of his own conscience, which, sooner or later, must be awakened."

"I think," said the duke, "lord Mortimer will not be inclined to harbour him, when his perfidious counsels to lord Edwin are made known. The forged letter, and the forcible detention of our sweet Ellen, betray the deep hatred of the tutor, and the unmanly weakness of his pupil."

Ellen coloured ; she cast her eyes timidly towards her father, and said—
"I hope that the late ungenerous conduct of lord Edwin will never be discovered to his uncle, since I am well assured that ere this he repents of having been led astray by the wickedness of his preceptor. Besides, my dear father," and her cheek grew redder as she spoke, "his lordship only wished to raise me to an equality with himself. I am certain he was sincere in his professions. Let us not, therefore, disgrace him in the opinion of his family."

Deloraine

Deloraine was silent ; yet his mind was deeply occupied. He cast a glance towards Mrs. Woodville, whose thoughts appeared to coincide with his own.

Fearing lest the fair travellers might suffer from their rapid journey, the duke and Deloraine left them to their repose, and retired to the chamber of the former, where, after the servants had withdrawn, the two friends sat down to enjoy the luxury of anticipated pleasures, and to talk of Ellen—her beauty, her accomplishments; and her virtues.

“I see,” cried the duke, “by the quick movements of her brilliant eyes, so like your own, and the rapid changes of her animated and intelligent features, that she possesses the spirit and talents of her father; while the occasional tenderness which softens down their fire, the fascinating smile that plays round her dimpled mouth, and the bewitching eloquence of her countenance, when addressing those
she

she loves, betray that her heart is as susceptible as that of her lamented mother."

"I fear," replied Deloraine, "that it is no longer in her own possession. The warmth with which she pleads for lord Edwin, and the deep regret she expresses for his having acted unworthy her esteem, alarms me for the repose of her future years."

"That he loves her, I am confident," said the duke; "indeed, how can he do otherwise? So prepossessing in his appearance, so pleasing his manners, that I heard with real concern the account of his duplicity, and still hope that he may retrieve, by his penitence and good conduct, the fair character he bore."

"Such also are my hopes," replied his friend. "If his heart is untainted by the poisonous maxims of Leopold—if he has only been led astray by his dangerous counsels, and is convinced of the improper part he has acted, I shall be the first

first to pity and forgive. To-morrow, my dear Fitz-Aubin, will try the friendship and candour of more than one of that family. Their reception of my Ellen will prove their own true nobility."

The next morning, Mrs. Woodville, Ellen, and the duke, got into the carriage of the latter, and proceeded to the Castle of lord Mortimer. The heart of Ellen throbbed with a variety of different feelings, as she once more entered the house which she had so lately been seduced from. Trembling with hope, fear, and expectation, she leaned on the arm of his grace, who, pressing her hand affectionately, told her to have good courage, since the justness of her claims were indisputable.

The family had not quitted the breakfast-parlour when the servant announced the unexpected visitors. Amazement was depicted on more faces than one. The marchioness and Miss Beaumont rose from their seats and left the room ; while

Courteney

Courteney and lord Edwin looked at each other, in pale and terrified surprise. Lady Caroline in an instant was round the neck of her favourite, who tenderly returned her caresses, and only quitted her to hasten to the extended arms of lord Mortimer, who, after embracing her with parental affection, conducted Mrs. Woodville and the duke to his private apartments, on their intimating that they had something of importance to communicate.

The look which Mrs. Woodville cast on Courteney alarmed him, and he hastily withdrew, followed by his repentant pupil, who, humbled and abashed, scarce dared to raise his eyes to the beloved form of Ellen Woodville ; while the marquis and young Beaumont were eager to testify their pleasure at seeing her once more amongst them.

Lady Caroline was too much interested in every thing that concerned her friend to remain long in ignorance of what had
occasioned

occasioned her visit, accompanied as she was by her mother and the duke of Fitz-Aubin. She therefore hurried her as soon as she could to her own chamber, where Ellen immediately discovered who she was, to the inexpressible rapture of her generous friend.

“ You may laugh as much as you please, my dear Ellen,” said her ladyship ; “ but I believe more than ever now in the gipsey’s prophecy, and sincerely hope that you will triumph over all your enemies. Edwin, on his return from his shooting-party, which happened sooner than we expected, appeared much disconcerted, and has been low spirited and melancholy ever since he heard the news of your departure ; while Courteney made up a fine story about his being taken suddenly ill on the road, and being obliged to stay at the inn, whence you were necessarily compelled to proceed without him. My uncle and I felt alarmed on your account ; and I was just

going to write to you, my dear girl, when you so agreeably surprised us by your presence."

They now heard the voice of lord Mortimer in the gallery, and a moment after he entered, followed by the duke and Mrs. Woodville.

"Where is my sweet child? where is the daughter of my lost Althea?" cried the earl.

Ellen flung herself on her knees before him. Lord Mortimer instantly raised and pressed her fondly to his bosom.

"Fly, Caroline," said he, "and tell your mother that Ellen Woodville is the dear infant that I so inhumanly consigned to the hands of a stranger: and you, my noble friend, who have so generously espoused the cause of injured innocence, oh, hasten to the persecuted Deloraine; tell him that I acknowledge his daughter as countess of Brandon; that I loved her first for her own merits, and now love her for being the offspring of Althea and
of

of Edmund Deloraine ! Bring him with you, I entreat ; and let this dear and lovely girl be the happy means of reconciling us to each other."

The duke willingly hastened to execute the wishes of lord Mortimer, while that nobleman seemed to think that he could not be lavish enough of his tenderness on Ellen. The dowager marchioness was not slow in testifying her readiness to receive, as a relation, the young favourite of her brother ; and Ellen could not help feeling a secret pleasure at the consciousness that the education which had been bestowed on her, by the benevolent Mrs. Woodville, had been such as to render her not unworthy the exalted rank to which she was thus suddenly raised.

To the delicate inquiries of lord Mortimer's sister, Mrs. Woodville gave the most satisfactory answers. She produced the bank-note which Harris had presented to her husband, and which the earl re-

membered to have given to his steward for that purpose; it was marked with the initials of the person from whom he had himself received it. The mantle, the miniature, and the piece of the velvet curtain, were likewise displayed, and Mrs. Mason was summoned to identify these.

At sight of objects so well remembered, the faithful nurse of the deceased countess burst into tears. Ellen, with her accustomed sweetness, ran to her relief, and supported her, while the earl explained the cause of their being now brought forward. Her affection, her surprise, her gratitude to God, who had thus miraculously restored the supposed dead infant of her beloved mistress, operated forcibly on the nerves of this fond creature; she wept and prayed by turns; then kissed the hands of Ellen, with a love, a reverence, bordering on devotion. Ellen, not less affected, returned her kindness by the most lively demonstrations

strations of regard ; and Mrs. Mason, when a little recovered, offered to swear to the authenticity of the articles before her.

“It is unnecessary, my worthy Mason,” said the dowager marchioness ; “we have not a single doubt of this dear girl’s relationship. The upper part of her face is so exactly that of her father, that I only wonder my brother never noticed what struck me immediately. Retire, Mason, and compose yourself ; this unlooked-for blessing has overpowered you.”

Ellen was seated between the earl and his sister, who held each a hand ; Mrs. Woodville next her ladyship, smiling and weeping, with excess of pleasure, at the flattering reception her darling had met with ; while lady Caroline had placed herself on a footstool before Ellen, and was gazing on her with every demonstration of sisterly affection. The door opened—and Deloraine, supported

by the duke, entered. Lady Caroline in a moment was off her seat ; and before her uncle had dropped the hand of Ellen, she took that of Deloraine, and exclaimed, with animating pleasure—“ Welcome, my dear sir, to the Castle ! as the father of our Ellen, you are doubly welcome ! ”

Ellen rushed into the arms of Deloraine, and breathless with agitation, led him to the advancing earl. She placed his hand in that of her father, who trembled violently, as lord Mortimer folded them both in his arms.

“ Dear Deloraine ! ” faintly articulated his lordship, “ let the present countess of Brandon be the pledge of our mutual forgiveness. Let the past be buried in oblivion, and all our thoughts be alone directed to the promotion of Ellen’s happiness.”

Deloraine, grateful for the willingness with which his child was thus acknowledged by her noble relations, dashed
away

away the tear of remembered anguish ; and, pressing the hand of lord Mortimer to his lips, replied, with tolerable firmness—" I accept *now*, my lord, your proffered kindness with gratitude and affection Henceforward, I shall only remember your generous and noble readiness to do justice to my daughter, who, I flatter myself, is capable of adding to the lustre of the family of which she is now become a member."

He turned to the aunt of his lost Althea ; their eyes met. Both were instantly filled with tears ; both recollected the angelic creature who was living when last they saw each other.

" Sister," said the earl, " will you have the goodness to take under your care the duke of Fitz-Aubin ? Conduct him to the rest of the family, who I will also thank you to acquaint with the blissful discovery that is made ; while I and Mr. Deloraine converse on the subject nearest our hearts. Caroline, my

dear girl, give orders for rooms to be immediately got ready for our ever-welcome friends. To your friendly care, and that of Ellen, I consign Mrs. Woodville, to whom I with pride acknowledge myself as being indebted for the treasured happiness I now possess, since to her we are eternally bound by every tie of gratitude and love for the justice she has done to her adopted child."

"Oh, my lord!" replied Mrs. Woodville, "I am amply rewarded for all my solicitude, by the endearing disposition, the talents and virtues of our beloved Ellen."

Ellen pressed her lips to those of her maternal friend in grateful tenderness; and casting a look of unspeakable fondness on her father and grandfather, she conducted Mrs. Woodville to the drawing-room, followed by lady Caroline, her mother, and the duke.

No sooner was the news of Ellen's birth made known, than the whole Castle
resounded

resounded with acclamations of honest joy. All the domestics, to whom she had endeared herself by the sweetness and affability of her manners, were eager to express their sincere pleasure at the discovery of her rank ; while the marquis, forgetful of the jealousy of his wife, claimed the privilege of a cousin, and embraced her most affectionately.

Adolphus Beaumont followed his example, and congratulated her with evident satisfaction on her good fortune ; while lady Beaumont and Clarissa vainly tried to stifle their real sentiments, and to force their features to assume a corresponding expression to their words. In their hearts they, however, hated the newly-discovered countess ; and resolved, in the course of a few days, to take their leave of her and the Castle.

The marchioness, ashamed of her past conduct, yet too proud to confess it, coldly wished her joy, and Ellen as coldly

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received

received it ; but the indifference of the marchioness was atoned for by the redoubled kindness of the marquis, who seemed to delight in calling her his lovely cousin, and contributing all in his power towards making her forget the illiberality of her former friend.

During the private conference of the earl and Deloraine, the latter laid open the real character of his base and cowardly enemy ; the treachery and complicated perfidy of Courteney towards his amiable wife and innocent children, with the forged letter sent to Ellen ; his knowledge of her birth, and his consequent hatred ; these were each separately dwelt upon by the man who had suffered so severely by his duplicity ; and lord Mortimer heard, with horror and alarm, that the tutor of his nephews, the friend and confidant of himself, the devout and pious Leopold Courteney, was a designing, detestable hypocrite—the very reverse.

verse of what he had for so many years appeared to him and to all his connexions.

“ Gracious Heaven !” exclaimed the earl; “ I look back with remorse and vain regret upon the implicit faith I put in the virtue and sanctity of this wretch—this abandoned profligate. Another time, my dear Deloraine, I will communicate to you the share he had in, and the influence he possessed over, my actions. The present blissful hours must not be clouded by painful recollections. He imposed on me grossly ; and I only hope that I may never see his face again. I have been a complete dupe to his artful insinuations ; and can only console myself that our Ellen has fortunately escaped from his wicked plot, whatever it might be.”

At the dinner-table, lord Edwin, with downcast eyes and changeful features, took his seat ; his uncle informed him of Ellen’s near relationship ; and he was

thus compelled to address *her* whom he felt he had offended past the hope of forgiveness. The vacant place of Courteney was noticed by the marchioness, who, inquiring after him, was told by the footman, that Mr. Courteney had rode over to sir William Lisburne's.

“ When he returns,” said the earl, with manifest displeasure, “ let the letter which I have left on my table be given him immediately, and order a chaise to be in readiness by six o'clock to-morrow morning. It is necessary that Mr. Courteney should leave my house before I quit my chamber.”

All looked amazed, yet none dared inquire into the reason of this sudden journey. When the servants had withdrawn, lord Mortimer said—“ It is but right, my dear friends, that I should account for the strange order I have just given, to expel for ever from my house a man, who, for so many years, has artfully

fully contrived to gain our united esteem and good opinion ; but who, I trust, will never dare to intrude himself again on my notice."

The surprise of those unacquainted with Courteney's hypocrisy was now increased ; but that surprise changed to horror and disgust, as the earl briefly recapitulated the principal proofs of Leopold's duplicity and villany. They could hardly believe it possible that so base a character existed ; while that part of the company who had been more or less the easy dupes of his treacherous insinuations, shewed, by the changeful expression of their countenances, their shame and vexation.

" His malevolent designs against my sweet Ellen," continued the earl, " remain still to be explained. I can easily comprehend his hatred towards her, since he was the confidant of Mrs. Woodville, who, in shewing him the miniature in her possession, gave him the most convincing
proof

proof of her birth ; but what his motive was for forging the letter which occasioned her so suddenly to leave our protection, must shortly be accounted for. I will not see him ; but, now I think of it, Edwin, fetch me the letter which I left on my table ; I can still make the necessary insertion."

" Oh, no, my dear sir," hastily replied Ellen ; " do not demand any explanation of a man whose veracity is not to be relied on. Leave him to the stings of his own private reflections, which must, sooner or later, embitter every moment of his existence. His dismissal from this family, and the open exposure of his long concealed duplicity, may awaken in his bosom sentiments of remorse ; and his poor wife at least may derive some benefit from his repentance."

" Do not deceive yourself, my dear Ellen," said the duke, " with any such hope. The forced penitence of a man who could abandon his wife and children

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to all the horrors of want and misery—who could betray the generous friend that had at all times readily afforded him assistance under his embarrassments—and whose soul was capable of forming a wish inimical to *your* repose and comfort, or of uttering falsehoods to injure the unsullied purity of *your* intentions, is not to be trusted to, or believed. Had it not been for the noble efforts of Deloraine, the object of his envy and his malice, his deserving wife and family must have fallen victims to his desertion of them—must have starved to death, while *he* was enjoying every luxury that this house affords.”

“ Dreadful, indeed !” was the general exclamation ; while each face evinced the chill shudder of horror.

“ Wretched man !” cried lord Mortimer, “ what pains it must have cost him to become so successful a hypocrite ! Villain as he has proved himself to those most dear to me, I will not utterly abandon
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don him to his proper punishment. In consideration of his having been more just to my nephews than to the rest of mankind, I will make him a present of five hundred pounds, which will enable him to purchase a small annuity for the remainder of his miserable life ; and this is even more than he has any right to expect, considering the unpardonable and unprovoked treachery of his conduct to my family and friends."

"Thank God !" replied the dowager marchioness, "that my sons have escaped the fatal influence of his vicious principles and depraved inclinations. Poor Susan Homely ! I now begin to suspect who was thy cruel seducer. Oh, my dear brother ! can I ever be sufficiently grateful to Heaven that my beloved children remain uninjured by the baneful society, advice, and maxims, of this consummate hypocrite !"

The cheek of lord Edwin turned pale, then red ; he ventured to cast a look towards Ellen. The sweetest expression
of

of pity and regret beamed in her eyes. Hastily casting his own on the ground, he felt his inferiority; and the painful conviction of having lost a heart once his—a heart full of tenderness and love for himself, gave to his handsome features the ashy hue of death.

A deep sigh from Ellen caught the ear of the marquis.

“My lovely cousin,” said he, kissing her hand gaily, “has no cause to sigh; look round you, Ellen; are you not with those who have ever been ready to do justice to your merits? If there be one among this friendly circle whose mind has been led astray by the seeming godliness, sincerity, and goodness of Courteney, and who has put too much faith in his *private* exhortations, the discovery of his infamy must convince that one of his own credulity and misplaced confidence.”

“It might be the sigh of pleasure,” said lady Caroline, willing to relieve her friend,

friend, who well understood the meaning of the noble marquis. "What else could call forth a sigh from the bosom of one so young, so lovely, and now so wealthy? Why, Ellen, my sweet girl, you are one of the richest heiresses, and a countess! Positively, above *me* in the world, who am only a lady by courtesy! See the smile of pride and exultation which animates the features of your father, my uncle, nay, even the duke of Fitz-Aubin; while *I* must sit down contentedly, and give precedence to a little rustic, whom I loved well enough while I thought her a parson's sister, but whom I shall envy and detest, now that she is placed above me."

Ellen could not refrain from kissing the glowing cheek of her affectionate and steady friend, who read in the approving eyes of Deloraine and the duke, their admiration and knowledge of her friendly conduct towards their idol.

The marchioness now felt assured of
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the injustice she had done her former favourite, and anxiously watched the opportunity of acknowledging her error. Ellen generously requested her not to dwell on a subject which must be disagreeable to her—"since I am certain," said she, "that nothing but the cruel misrepresentations of such an apparently devout man as Mr. Courteney, could have tempted you to listen to any thing injurious to my honour or our former friendship."

The marchioness shewed so much real contrition for her past behaviour, that Ellen most readily excused it; and thus, in spite of Leopold's malice, the two friends were re-united more firmly than before, to the great joy of lady Caroline and the marquis.

Miss Beaumont, however she might be convinced of Courteney's perfidy, yet could not so easily forget that the charms and superior attractions of Ellen had robbed her of her lover. Under
pretence

pretence of having received letters from her grandfather, the duke of *****, she, with her mother, quitted the Castle, a few days after the return of her rival, to the no small satisfaction of lady Caroline and Ellen, each being convinced that they had widely mistaken the real character of Clarissa, since the disclosure of Leopold's villany had not produced those proper sentiments of concern and sorrow which a noble mind is ever ready to evince, when it has unintentionally committed an act of injustice.

Adolphus Beaumont, however, remained at the Castle, the acknowledged lover and intended husband of lady Caroline. Fortunately for his peace, he was perfectly ignorant of the mean share his sister had taken in the intended disgrace of Ellen; and generously hoped that the coolness which evidently subsisted between lord Edwin and her would speedily be done away, and that a return to their former affectionate habits would finally terminate

terminate in their union ; since, notwithstanding the reluctance his lordship had shewn to acknowledge his real sentiments for Ellen, he firmly believed that his affections were hers—and hers only. Equally liberal-minded as lady Caroline, he rejoiced that the newly-discovered rank of Ellen placed her upon an equality with her lover ; and by that means removed every obstacle which had once existed, to crush the hopes of lord Edwin's obtaining the consent of his uncle.

Instead of the smile of happiness which he therefore expected to see illumine the countenance of his friend, it was with no small surprise and concern that Beaumont beheld the fixed melancholy and disconcerted air of lord Edwin. He noticed it to lady Caroline ; and besought her to speak to her brother on the subject. Her ladyship smiled on him affectionately.

“ The quarrels of lovers, my dear Adolphus,” said she, “ bear a strong affinity

affinity to those of husband and wife ; in which case, the interference of a third person seldom, if ever, produces any good. I will, however, try my influence over Edwin, who, I fear, has suffered himself to be governed by his wicked preceptor, against the pleadings of his own reason and better feelings. I also suspect that the delicacy of Ellen leads her to conceal from *me* a second offence of Edwin's ; since her anxiety not to have Courteney's recent conduct investigated leads me to suppose that my unhappy brother was his accomplice in her removal. If so, I have no hope that my dear friend will ever be brought to entertain for him those sentiments of confidence and regard she once did, and without which the married state must be most wretched."

" True, dearest Caroline ; but let us hope that Edwin has not sinned beyond forgiveness. I have long known the unlimited power his tutor had over him ;
and

and surely he is to be pitied, for having been placed under the direction of a man of such infamous principles, who has evidently made his pupil's very virtues subservient to his own private resentments."

Lady Caroline, who tenderly loved her brother, watched anxiously for an opportunity to speak to him, upon the change in his looks and manners; and followed him, therefore, one morning, as he quitted the breakfast-parlour. Taking his arm, she requested him to accompany her in a walk to the village, to which he readily consented, on her assuring him that she should be alone. Lord Edwin was not proof against the affectionate solicitude of his sister. He scrupled not to avow the extent of his guilt; and lady Caroline heard with the deepest regret the dishonourable treatment of Ellen at the farm in the forest.

"I feel," said he, "that I have, by following the base counsels of Courteney, lost all claim to the heart of Ellen. Had I
loved

loved her less passionately, [I should not, strange as it may appear, have hazarded so much to make her mine, by the most solemn engagements. Contrary to the advice of my preceptor, I sought only to gain her as my wife ; while he supposed that her person was to be obtained on less honourable terms. Oh, Caroline ! how cruelly have I been deceived in that perfidious man ! Yet I deserve to be the victim of his duplicity, since I was more than half a convert to his opinions. The loss of such a woman as Ellen would be severe at any time ; but to lose her by my own rashness, to forfeit the esteem, the affection, she once entertained for me, is distracting. No penitence, no self-inflicted penance, can atone for the crime I have committed ; and yet, had she really loved me, I think she would excuse a fault which proceeded from the excess of my passion for herself. Had it been possible for Ellen to have transgressed, to have wounded my
confiding

confiding affection, with what rapture should I pronounce her pardon, and restore her to the first place in my heart !”

“ Ah, my dear Edwin ! but our sweet cousin had formed so high an opinion of your character, had conceived you to be so superior to the common weaknesses of human nature, that her disappointment is not a light one, at finding you fall short of what first excited her regard. I also have met with my share of mortification ; for I had always regretted that there should exist any impediment to your union with my friend ; and now that impediment is removed, to know that your own folly has created another, still more formidable than the first, gives me great uneasiness ; yet, my dear Edwin, do not wholly despair ; endeavour to regain her esteem by your future actions, and I will try all my influence, at the most favourable moments, to soften her heart and mind towards you.”

Lord Edwin sighed bitterly—“ Thank

you, dearest Caroline, for your kind intentions ; but I fear they will be fruitless. Ellen will never forget, though she may forgive, the last proof of my rashness. Unable to endure her indifference, or support with firmness the alteration in her manners, I shall leave, in a few days, the Castle, and accept of sir William Lisburne's invitation to accompany his family to Bath. My absence will be most acceptable to the countess, who will then be relieved from the sight of one, who, whatever she may think, will never be able to banish from his remembrance the object of his first affections."

Lady Caroline did not disapprove of this purposed journey of her brother ; she had little hopes of Ellen ever becoming his wife, now that he had a second time proved the weakness of his nature ; and she therefore rather rejoiced than otherwise at his intended visit to Bath, since the family of sir William were all
amiable,

amiable, and in many respects well calculated to be of essential service to lord Edwin in his present unhappy state of mind. His attachment to Ellen had not escaped their notice ; and its unfortunate termination would not only excite their friendly sympathy, but create the very natural desire of entertaining as much as possible the imprudent, but not criminal pupil, of the profligate and hypocritical Courteney.

CHAP. V.

ELLEN's legitimate right to the title and estates of her mother being clearly made out, she was openly acknowledged as countess of Brandon, and received the congratulations of the neighbouring families, who sincerely participated in the general happiness which this unlooked-

for event occasioned. Amongst the more humble class of individuals, Ellen was equally beloved and respected. The honest inhabitants of Homely Farm, and Deloraine's faithful Jem, scarce knew how to restrain the overflowings of their hearts; while Mrs. Mason and Naomi hardly thought or spoke of any one else. The affection of the former was now increased to adoration; she seemed only to live, to breathe, in the presence of the young countess; while the grateful kindness of Ellen frequently brought the tear of mingled pain and pleasure into her eyes—pleasure at beholding the child whom she had lamented as dead, pain at the recollection of her mother's untimely fate.

Mrs. Woodville now prepared to return to the Parsonage, after an absence of three weeks, during which time she had met with the most flattering attention from every one related to lord Mortimer, and from Deloraine in particular,
whose

whose gratitude knew no bounds. November was fast approaching; and Ellen had promised to be present at Fanny's nuptials, which were to take place early in that month.

"Let us make a party, and surprise sir Godfrey," said the marquis; "since our dear cousin wishes to return to the Parsonage. Dora will be so delighted; and we cannot spend our time, I think, Jemima, more pleasantly."

To this the marchioness willingly agreed; and lord Mortimer, who would not consent to be separated from his grandchild, made them all happy by volunteering to accompany them. His sister and the earl of St. Laurence were engaged to be in town by a certain time; but lady Caroline and Adolphus Beaumont were to remain until the earl, with the young countess and her friends, went to London. The dowager marchioness was therefore requested to procure for them a house, and every thing requisite

for their reception, by the latter end of December.

It was now that lord Edwin made known his determination of going to Bath, to the no small surprise of his uncle, who had beheld with extreme concern the change in the lively and fascinating manners of his nephew, since his return from his shooting expedition. He therefore began to suspect that lord Edwin had formed an attachment for the second daughter of sir William Lisburne, and took an opportunity of questioning him on the subject; at the same time assuring him, that the event which had taken place in the family, by which he had discovered his beloved grandchild, should not materially injure the fortune which he had destined for him.

“ Believe me,” said the earl, “ when I tell you, Edwin, that my love for you remains the same as before this blissful addition to my happiness. I will take care that your prospects in life shall be
equally

equally good; since the accumulated property of your cousin will, by the time she is of age, be so immense, that she will not require any addition to it from mine. I once imagined that the beauty of Ellen, which was, indeed, highly dangerous for so young a man to have constantly before him, had called into action the tenderness of your natural disposition, and given birth to hopes and wishes to which, *then*, I should certainly have been averse; but now I know of no circumstance that would afford me such delight as seeing you, my dear Edwin, the husband of Ellen."

The confusion of lord Edwin was but too visible; he trembled so violently, that his uncle, in the most affectionate manner, besought him to compose himself, and to confide to him the reason of his present agitation. Thus encouraged, the unhappy youth, with tears of penitence and grief for his past misconduct, made a full confession to lord Mortimer

of the villanous projects and advice of Courteney, and the fatal consequence of his weak and blind obedience.

Lord Mortimer, stung to the soul by this painful proof of the too-yielding nature of his nephew, nevertheless endeavoured to console him, and promised to consult with Deloraine upon the best means of sounding the real inclinations of the countess, before he made his final arrangements for the journey to Bath.

“ Alas, my dear uncle !” said lord Edwin, with an air of deep dejection, “ I am destitute of every hope. What first gained me the tenderness of Ellen was my strong resemblance to her favourite brother. Her imagination gave to my mind all the firmness and solidity of Theodore ; and she loved me in proportion as she believed me to be like him. My own mistaken confidence in the supposed wisdom of my hypocritical tutor, my fatal weakness in following his treacherous

cherous advice, has too fully convinced her of my feelings, and lost me the inestimable treasure of her affection !”

“ Well, well,” exclaimed the earl, “ I will try what is to be done for you. That you have acted imprudently, I acknowledge ; but the sorrow and contrition you manifest for your fault in some measure atones for it.”

Lord Edwin sighed hopelessly and withdrew ; while his uncle sought the father of the countess, and soon made known to him the confession of his desponding nephew. Deloraine sincerely pitied the young lord. His manners, his appearance, his general habits, were such as gave the fairest promise of a good heart, and a good disposition ; and the match was in every respect a desirable one. Yet the conduct of Ellen, since her return to the Castle, had not given any indications of that tenderness which the warmth of her excuses for his errors had given him leave to suppose she felt

—"I will, however," said he, "go in search of my dear girl; since it will be but charitable to end, at once, the painful suspense of your nephew."

Ellen was alone in the sitting-room of the late countess, when her father's entrance made her raise her eyes from a letter, which she was perusing with evident satisfaction and delight.

"What have you there, my dearest child?" said he. "Is it a letter from the duke of Fitz-Aubin, or from the Parsonage? By the animation of your countenance, I perceive it comes from a beloved friend."

His grace had been unwillingly compelled to leave the Castle, after a fortnight's stay; and as he had begun a correspondence with Ellen, Deloraine thought it might be from him.

"No, dearest father," said the countess, rising and kissing his cheek with fondness; "this is neither from our highly-valued duke, nor from the dear inmates

of the Parsonage ; but from one who I long to present to you, and who, I now flatter myself, I shall see in the course of a few weeks. It is from Theodore ! that beloved brother, whose picture you have seen and admired. Oh, my father ! I have but one wish ungratified ; and if I am disappointed in that, I shall feel most acutely the inability of riches to procure happiness."

Deloraine pressed her to his bosom with unutterable tenderness. His eyes glanced round the apartment, which he had never had courage to enter until that morning. The window by which he had first gained access to it—the seat, sacredly dear, as having received the angelic form of his sainted wife, brought her most forcibly to his recollection ; the tears rushed into his eyes : again he kissed the blooming face of Ellen ; and trying to conceal from her his emotion, said—"What wish, my beloved daughter, is it that you have ungratified ? Speak, adored pledge of my Althea's

matchless love ; fear not to trust the secret of your heart to him who was so fondly, so dotingly loved by thy mother !”

“ Oh, my father !” replied the lovely countess, “ I have not a thought that I would hide from you. I wish, if possible, to make some amends to my dear maternal friend for her care, and the expence bestowed on my education. I could not do this more effectually than by persuading her youngest son to quit a profession he dislikes, and enable him to reside with his mother, whose life depends on his.”

“ And do you think, Ellen, that you have sufficient influence over this young man to make him quit the noble service of his country, and live a life of ease and idleness at home with his mother ?”

“ Yes, dear father ; I have the vanity to believe that Theodore loves me dearer than he does Fanny or James. From infancy we always preferred each other. In our childish sports, Theodore was always
my

my companion ; and as we grew older, our attachment increased. He was my brother—my friend, and the object dearest to my soul. *His* praise, and the desire to prove worthy of it, has been my chief incitement to excel in every accomplishment ; and now, my dear father, that I am thus suddenly raised to wealth and power, can I make a better use of both, than by placing my dear brother in a situation of independence, which will enable him to be the support of his mother's declining years ?”

“ My Ellen,” said Deloraine, as he parted the bright yellow ringlets which overshadowed her fair forehead, and hid the azure of her heavenly eyes, “ I will think how your wish can be accomplished, without hurting the delicacy of your early friend, or wounding the proper pride of her son. Remember, my sweet girl, that although you may continue to feel for that amiable family the same tenderness as when you supposed yourself a
part

part of it, yet Theodore is now apprised of your real birth ; you are no longer his *sister* ; and though his heart may ever be ready to own you as such, he will not, if he is all that you have represented him to be, accept of the independence your generosity and affection proposes for him. A sister's gift, and one from the countess of Brandon, would be received with very different feelings. I mean not to cast a damp over your spirits, my Ellen ; on the contrary, your grandfather, as well as myself, has in contemplation the interests and welfare of the Woodville family, and your favourite shall not be forgotten. But I sought you, my beloved Ellen, in behalf of a sincere penitent—nay, start not, my child ! The name of lord Edwin did not always occasion the *same* agitation. He has acknowledged to his uncle the extent of his crime, and his hopelessness of your pardon ; yet, Ellen, your father can pity and sympathize in his distress.

Is

Is the heart of my child less sensible to his sincere contrition, or are these tears which fall fast on my hand the sweet tokens of his forgiveness?"

"I freely pardon lord Edwin," replied Ellen, "the insult he offered to me, when he supposed me his inferior, and when my unprotected situation gave him the power of confining me against my will. What *more*, my father, can he expect?—what *more* has he a right to demand?"

"Excess of love was the sole cause of his offence," said Deloraine. "Under the influence of that vile and corrupt hypocrite, great merit, I think, is due to lord Edwin, for adhering to his honourable intentions of making you his wife. Perhaps, Ellen, he deceived himself into a belief that you were not averse to his attachment; if so, is more than ever an object of pity."

"I confess, my dear father, that his lordship's resemblance to my brother
Theodore

Theodore first endeared him to my heart. I vainly conceived his mind and principles to be equally noble. Under this unhappy error I remained, until my affections insensibly became his. Convinced of my mistake, by his ready obedience to the counsels of his preceptor, and by being myself an unwilling listener to his cowardly disavowal of his real sentiments, though he was pressed by Mr. Beaumont and the marquis to acknowledge them, I discovered that I had been worshipping an imaginary idol; and my regret, my anguish, was indeed severe. On my recovering from the shock I had sustained, I found that my feelings had undergone a change. I pitied lord Edwin; I felt interested in his welfare and happiness; but I no longer loved him. Dearest father! do not *you* become his advocate; since, if I yield to *your* persuasive eloquence, I shall be miserable for life."

"Heaven in its mercy forbid," exclaimed

claimed Deloraine, "that such should be thy fate, my Ellen! No, dearest child; this is the last time that I shall ever mention the subject. Lord Edwin, conscious of his fault when too late, intends going with sir William Lisburne to Bath, and thus you will be freed from the presence of a man, who, after all, is more to be pitied than condemned. Dry your tears, my Ellen; thy happiness is all I have to study. If it depends on me, you shall not have *one wish ungratified*."

He now embraced her affectionately, then hastened to make known to her grandfather the result of his conversation.

Ellen, thus left alone to her own reflections, wiped away the tear which still trembled in her eye for the self-inflicted distress of lord Edwin—"Ah!" said she, "had he been in reality the counterpart of him who wrote this letter, it would not have been necessary for me to shun his company, or for him to avoid mine. Raised to an equality with himself, this
Castle

Castle would have been the scene of our happiness, of our mutual bliss, and not, as now, the grave of our affections. Oh, Edwin ! how tenderly I once loved thee, Heaven and my own heart can witness ! With what pleasure should I have fulfilled the wishes of my father and the earl ! and, in becoming thy wife, have deemed myself most fortunate. But *now*, how changed my inclinations ! No longer my heart flutters at the well-known sound of thy footsteps—no longer palpitates as thy graceful form meets my half-averted eye ; the tones of thy melodious voice have ceased to charm ; and all the heaven of rapture I once felt, is turned to misery ; even my dear father has chilled the ardour of my hopes, has raised an obstacle to the only circumstance which afforded me any remuneration for the disappointment I have met with. Should Theodore's tenderness abate by the discovery of my superior rank, how shall I lament that I did not for ever remain in
ignorance.

ignorance of that event, since any diminution of his regard would be terrible indeed!"

The certainty of Ellen's sentiments being now unchangeable, was made known to lord Edwin, with great delicacy, by his uncle; and this unhappy and unfortunate young nobleman heard his irrevocable destiny with every demonstration of submission.

"I am unworthy to possess the heart of Ellen," said lord Edwin, "and I yield to the justice of her punishment. Yet tell her, my dear uncle, although separated for ever from her *love*, I will endeavour to regain her *esteem*, her *friendship*. My future actions shall convince her that the too-yielding pupil of Courteney is free from the *vices* of his preceptor. The loss of all I held most dear has been the price of my sad experience; and the lesson I have now received from the countess of Brandon shall not be given in vain. When next

we meet, I hope to be entitled to something more than her pity."

Lady Caroline's ever-lively countenance could not help evincing her sorrow at the necessity of her brother's absence ; yet she so highly respected the refinement of Ellen's feelings, that she did her utmost to conceal her secret vexation ; and only confessed to Adolphus the chagrin she felt at the firmness of her favourite.

Ellen, from the window of Mrs. Woodville's dressing-room, saw lord Edwin depart. The melancholy dejection which clouded his handsome features affected her sensibly ; and she could not refrain from shedding tears of regret, which were not unnoticed by her adopted mother.

" My Ellen," said this amiable woman, " you know not how keenly I feel for that misguided young man. I would not for the world influence your actions, yet I cannot help lamenting that in
this

This instance you have carried your expectations of human virtues too far."

"Oh, say not so, my dear mother," replied Ellen, throwing her arms round her neck. "Is not Theodore a living proof of every good quality? I know that every individual here secretly blames my conduct towards lord Edwin; but I am guided solely by the conviction that, unless I can meet with a man whose temper, mind, and principles, are the same as Theodore's, I must never marry."

Mrs. Woodville seemed lost in thought.

"Do you blame me, my dearest mother?"

"I cannot explain to you, Ellen, what then passed in my mind; but I am sensible that no man can love you more truly, more passionately, than the unfortunate lord Edwin."

The family now prepared to pay their unexpected visit to sir Godfrey; and Ellen once more halted at the inn where Courteney had feigned to be taken ill.

The

The recollection of his deception, and the still unknown motives of his recent conduct, clouded her brow with momentary thoughtfulness. She looked at her father ; she read in his fine eyes his pride and pleasure, as he gazed admiringly on his child ; and she felt that if she had lost a lover, she had gained a parent, worthy of all her fondness and duty.

The arrival of lord Mortimer and the rest of the party was indeed a most agreeable surprise to sir Godfrey and his daughter, who received them with the most lively marks of pleasure. Although it interfered with the intended plan of the worthy baronet, yet he nevertheless tenderly embraced the marchioness, and bade Dora give the necessary orders to the housekeeper for accommodating their noble guests.

“ Mr. Deloraine,” said Mrs. Woodville, “ will honour me by accepting of a bed at the Parsonage, and considering it his home ; and I am much mistaken if lady Caroline’s

Caroline's dark eyes do not intimate a desire to share with the countess in the humble fare of the same abode."

"You read right, my dear madam," cried her ladyship; "Ellen and I must not be separated. The simple elegance of your charming residence will afford me infinite gratification."

"I would request the favour of your company likewise, Mr. Beaumont," said Mrs. Woodville, "but for the expected return of my dear Theodore. We shall look for you, however, at the breakfast hour."

"My dear friend," replied sir Godfrey, "you know we are one family, and the distance is nothing; I have got rid of my gout; and if we breakfast with you, you must dine with me."

He had hardly done speaking, when the door of the drawing-room opened, and James Woodville, with Fanny, Colin Maxwell, his sister, and doctor Bennet, made their appearance, to the no small satisfaction

satisfaction of Mrs. Woodville and Ellen, who were just rising to go to the Parsonage. Dora Louvaine had dispatched a servant to inform them of the unexpected arrival of the beloved visitors, and they were not slow in hastening to embrace them.

Once more settled, for a time, at the home which was rendered dear to her, from a variety of pleasurable recollections, Ellen looked forward to the return of Theodore with watchful impatience. She was now daily surrounded by the objects of her fondest affections; his presence alone was wanting to render her happiness complete.

Sir Godfrey no longer concealed his intention of bestowing Dora on James Woodville; and lord Mortimer presented him with the rectory of the valuable living of which he was curate, and which, fortunately for James, had become vacant a few days after his lordship's arrival, whose great interest immediately obtained

ed

ed it for this truly deserving young man. All approved of sir Godfrey's choice in a son-in-law, who signified his wish that the marriage of Dora should be celebrated on the same day as that of Fanny Woodville and Colin Maxwell, the latter only delaying the completion of his happiness until Theodore could get leave of absence, to be present at the ceremony.

The morning on which he was expected was spent by Ellen in practising his most favourite airs, and in perfecting herself in those which she thought he would admire; she had therefore declined walking with the rest of the family to sir Godfrey's, promising, however, to bring Theodore, should he arrive in their absence. Every sound that approached made her start from the instrument, and run to the window, from which she returned thoughtful and disappointed. Unable to continue at the piano, she threw herself on a couch near the fire, and tried to divert her mind by a volume of Shakespeare,

peare. On a loose piece of paper she read the following lines, copied by Colin Maxwell:—

“ Oh, magic of love ! unembellish’d by you,
Has the garden a blush, or the herbage a hue ?
Or blooms there a prospect in nature or art,
Like the vista that shines through the eye to the heart ? ”

Ellen could not avoid reverting to those hours of delight which she had passed with lord Edwin, when she believed him worthy her affection ; hours were then but moments, enlivened by his presence. Had they flown with equal rapidity since the discovery of his weakness ? No ; that discovery had caused a vacuum in her heart, which time, and the presence of those she loved, alone could fill up. His voluntary exile, his dejection, and the real contrition he had manifested for his offence, however, pleaded powerfully in his favour ; yet Ellen felt it impossible to restore him to the high situation he once held in her opinion.

nion. She sighed deeply as the idea crossed her mind, that lord Edwin's peace and happiness might be injured by her rejection of him. Yet how could she do otherwise, since she no longer loved him with that confidence in his honour or integrity as she had formerly felt?

In the midst of her meditations, a chaise and four stopped at the Parsonage. She saw Theodore alight; she would have flown to welcome his arrival, but that she was withheld by the remembrance of her father's words; yet they had never occurred to her before: why now, when every wish was gratified by his return, did she stand trembling and blushing, and amazed at her own feelings, instead of, as usual, flying to be the first to gain his envied kiss?

In this posture Theodore found her. He rushed forward with extended arms; but in a moment he paused, coloured, and cast his eyes on the ground—"I had

forgotten, in the extacy of seeing you," said he in a confused manner, "that it is no longer Ellen Woodville, my sister, my bosom friend, but the countess of Brandon, the rich heiress of two noble families, whom I must now address."

Ellen raised her beautiful eyes reproachfully to his, and flinging back her shining ringlets from off her crimsoned cheek, she said—"And is it *you*, my brother, who are the first to make me regret the discovery of my birth? Has a change of name produced a change in that tenderness with which you have always distinguished me, and without which my existence must be wretched?"

Theodore flung his arms round her graceful form, and clasping her fondly to his bosom, pressed his lips to hers. For some minutes they remained in speechless pleasure.

"Oh Heaven!" exclaimed Theodore, "how shall I express my rapture at finding you still the same tender Ellen as
when

when I thought you were my sister? No, dearest girl, my heart can never change; although the superiority of your rank may compel me to remember, unwillingly, the distance now between us, yet its feelings will always be the same."

Ellen raised her head from the shoulder of Theodore, and smiling sweetly in his face, said, with bewitching tenderness—"I shall not admit of any distinction between us, my beloved Theodore. *Your* mother must be mine, and *I* your sister still."

Theodore again embraced her; yet there was a confusion in his looks which did not escape the quick glance of Ellen. She attributed it, however, to his remembrance of her newly-discovered rank, and she began to make many inquiries concerning the way in which he had passed his time since he had lost the society of his friend Colin Maxwell.

After he had satisfied her curiosity, and confessed that the deprivation he had

sustained had thrown him more than ever into the company of the baronet's family, whose daughter he had mentioned to her in several of his letters, he next inquired if lord Edwin had accompanied her back? and on Ellen's informing him that his lordship was gone to Bath, he looked incredulous. Not wishing to explain at that moment the mystery of his absence, she expatiated warmly on the universal kindness she had received from every individual of lord Mortimer's family, dwelling with gratitude on the generous friendship of lady Caroline and the marquis. Theodore wondered at her shyness in mentioning lord Edwin, yet waited another opportunity of questioning her as to the cause.

So fully had they been occupied in conversation, that Ellen completely forgot her promise of conducting Theodore to sir Godfrey's, until she saw her father and the rest of the party hastening across the lawn. As soon as mutual caresses
and

and congratulations had passed, she began to apologize for her remissness.

“We excuse you, my dear Ellen,” said her father, “for not, in this instance, keeping your word, since you and your favourite brother must have had many things to say to each other, and there are none here who will not allow that, under such circumstances, a breach of promise is very forgiveable.”

Mrs. Woodville’s features evinced the pride of maternal love; she saw the favourable impression the manly and handsome person of her son had already made on the mind of Deloraine; while Ellen, pressing a hand of each to her bosom, said—“Now I am truly happy, surrounded by *all* I love, *all* I value in the world, except the duke of Fitz-Aubin. Oh, my dear father! you know not the felicity I enjoy at this moment.”

“May it be lasting, my dearest Ellen!” cried lord Mortimer, who, with sir Godfrey and his guests, had accompanied Mrs. Woodville back to the Parsonage.

“ Oh, you sly rogue,” exclaimed the good-natured baronet, “ you talk of the felicity of the present moment ; what is it to that which you would feel on the return of a lover, on the eve of your wedding-day ?—Eh, Dora, Fanny—speak, girls : it is *you* that are best qualified to argue on that subject.”

The beauty of Ellen was heightened by her blushes, while the fine countenance of Theodore was equally crimson.

“ Upon my word, Ellen,” whispered lady Caroline, “ your adopted brother looks so captivatingly handsome, that if I was not positively engaged to Adolphus, I know not what might be the consequence.”

“ You are at no good there,” said the marquis ; “ some mischief is in agitation, Caroline, by the archness of your eyes.”

“ God bless her !” replied sir Godfrey ; “ I dare say she is only talking of the double wedding that is to be. Had you been a few days later, my young hero, I
know

know not whether the impatience of your brother and Maxwell might not have hurried them into a determination to delay their happiness no longer. But now that you are come, and that every thing is prepared, dresses made, music ready, dinner ordered, and all the village girls, with their best bibs and tuckers, only waiting for the word of command to ‘strew the way with fairest flowers,’ why, what is to prevent its taking place to-morrow?”

“Not to-morrow, dear father,” said Dora, modestly; “you are as impatient as James. You know we are to have a dance in the evening, and that it will be necessary to give our new neighbours, the Fitz-Georges, a few days notice. With that family we shall be able to make up sixteen couple.”

“Then send your invitations to-day, for I am determined, Dora, to have you married this week.—James, is not this Wednesday?”

“ Yes, sir.”

“ Well, then, on Saturday, please God, you shall become Mrs. Woodville; and on Sunday, James may preach his farewell sermon, as curate, to his parishioners. Let it be on the pleasures of matrimony, my dear boy, and I will be there to hear you.”

James kissed the hand of the amiable father of his Dora; while Colin, enraptured at the nearness of his bliss, warmly thanked the friendly baronet for hastening its completion.

“ Who are the Fitz Georges, my dear mother?” inquired Theodore.

“ They have lately occupied the house of lady Fenwick,” said Mrs. Woodville, “ to whom they are distantly related. Mrs. Fitz-George is the widow of a naval officer, who has been dead about nine months. She has a large family, all handsomely provided for; but as lady Fenwick, you know, is very rich, and very old, they have come to spend their
Christmas

Christmas with her, after having received many pressing invitations on her part. We have visited them several times, and think them an agreeable and pleasant acquaintance."

"One of the sons," said doctor Bennet, turning to Theodore, "is of your profession; he is a captain in the Guards, and a very fine young man."

The eyes of Ellen accidentally met those of Stella Maxwell, whose glowing cheek proclaimed an interest in the young soldier's fate, which was faithfully translated by the countess. On Mrs. Woodville's leaving the room, Theodore quickly followed her, anxious to learn more minutely the particulars of Ellen's birth. From her he now gained all the information he wanted, yet even his mother was reserved on the subject of Lord Edwin. He however gathered from her discourse, that a coolness subsisted between him and Ellen, which she, however, hoped would soon be done away.

Theodore felt angry with himself at being unable to join his mother in this friendly wish, and rejoiced at the presence of Colin Maxwell, who now came in search of him, and to whom he could fearlessly confide his every thought.

In describing the sudden change which he experienced on discovering the high birth of Ellen, and the different emotions which he felt on first seeing her after that discovery, he was mortified to perceive only a significant smile on the countenance of his friend, where he had looked for sympathy and condolence. Colin even avoided the subject, and talked purposely of his own approaching happiness.

Ellen was also too deeply engaged for him to converse with her as formerly ; all the females of the Parsonage were occupied by the preparations for the weddings ; and Theodore, displeased with himself and his own meditations, found solace in the affectionate attention and
conversation

conversation of Deloraine, who, as well as lord Mortimer, heaped on him the most flattering marks of their esteem.

The evening before the marriage of Fanny Woodville, the earl called aside his grand-daughter, and presenting her with a pocket-book, and a handsome set of pearl ornaments, told her to give both, as a wedding-gift, to her sister—"Open the pocket-book, my Ellen, and tell me if you are satisfied with what must be given in your name."

The countess obeyed, and to her great surprise and joy, beheld a check on lord Mortimer's banker for five thousand pounds.

"Oh, my dear grandfather," cried the delighted girl, kissing him affectionately "this is indeed conferring on me a lasting obligation; since any service rendered to the beloved family of my adopted mother, increases the debt I already owe to you."

The

The earl embraced her—"Your gratitude, my child, to those who have cherished you from your birth, and nourished you with such steady tenderness, makes you more estimable in my eyes. This is the *first* proof of your intention to bestow some compensation for the maternal care of Mrs. Woodville, and the sisterly affection of Fanny. James I have taken under my protection. Tomorrow will give him the possession of his heart's dearest wish; and the rectory which I procured for him will enable him to reside at the Parsonage, much to the satisfaction of Dora and sir Godfrey. Fanny will also be provided for, and divide her time, as well as she can, between her own family and that of her husband. Mrs. Woodville must reside with you, my Ellen, and enjoy the comforts which you have now the power of dispensing."

"But Theodore, my dear grandfather; you have not thought of him," said Ellen, visibly

visibly chagrined, and closing the case, which she had half opened.

“ I will procure for him a majority in the Guards. In time, you know, Ellen, he may be a general—will that do ? ”

“ I don't like the army. ”

“ But he does. ”

“ He made choice of it, my dear grandfather, in preference to the sea ; but I know his mother has always regretted it, lest he should be ordered on foreign service. I wish he would quit it entirely ; it would be a great happiness to her and to us all. ”

“ In that case, how would you provide for him, Ellen ? What reward would you offer to a high-spirited, brave young man, to induce him to relinquish the noble profession of arms, and lead a life of indolence and ease ? ”

The countess hesitated for a few minutes—“ Have you not said, my dear grandfather, that Mrs. Woodville should reside

reside with us at the Castle? and would not our little family circle be rendered still dearer by the addition of such a being as Théodore?"

"Certainly, my child; it is what I should wish—what I should rejoice at; but where is *his* reward? I was not in ignorance of *ours*."

Ellen looked and felt embarrassed—
"What greater reward would he require," said she, casting her eyes on the ground, "than the delightful consciousness of gratifying the wishes of his mother, and contributing to the happiness of those he loves?"

Lord Mortimer pressed her to his bosom—"And yet, my dear Ellen, you will find, dutiful and affectionate as he is, that, without a higher reward than what you have mentioned, Theodore will not agree to quit his profession. Go, my dear girl, to Fanny with your present, and let your reflections on your pillow suggest

suggest some more alluring remuneration for the sacrifice you require of her brother."

CHAP. VI.

FANNY Woodville and Colin Maxwell were enjoying the luxury of a *tête-à-tête* in James's study when Ellen softly entered. The arm of Colin was thrown round the neck of his intended bride, who, seated on the same chair, was listening attentively to the arrangements he was making for their future establishment. Ellen advanced, and with a smile of exulting tenderness, embraced her adopted sister; nor did she shrink from the fraternal caress of Colin, who, in the melting softness of the moment, only remembered that he had first known her as the sister of his Fanny.

"I come not to interrupt you, my
dear

dear friends," said she; "but as tomorrow is the nuptial day of my beloved Fanny, I have brought her a wedding-present, which she must accept for my sake."

Then opening the case, she displayed a valuable set of pearl ornaments, and was gratified at hearing both Fanny and her lover admire their richness.

"Wear them, my dear sister," said the countess, "as the gift of Ellen Woodville, for by that name I would still be remembered by you. This pocket-book may, perhaps, induce you to think yourself *indebted* to the countess of Brandon, yet you will be mistaken, Fanny, for it is she who must ever remain your debtor."

Saying this, she hurried out of the study, and joined the family-party, secretly thanking Heaven and the generosity of her grandfather, that had enabled her to bestow on one so beloved a marriage-portion.

The

The next morning, in compliance to the wishes of sir Godfrey, the ceremony was performed in the parish-church, by the eldest son of Mrs. Fitz-George. All the daughters of sir Godfrey's tenants were dressed in their new white gowns and straw hats, which had been given them by the worthy baronet; and thus attired, they ranged themselves on each side the aisle through which the company had to pass. When they had witnessed the consummation of their young lady's happiness, they, by the desire of sir Godfrey, returned to the Hall, where they were joined by their fathers and relations, to pass the remainder of the day, and to close it by a dance.

If the husband of Dora was less nobly allied than that of her sister, he was nevertheless equally beloved; and sir Godfrey determined to keep their wedding-day with as much splendour as if James had been the son of a duke. Fanny and Colin, with the whole family at the Parsonage, and the Fitz-Georges, partook of

of an elegant dinner ; sir Godfrey declaring that he should not rest that night, unless Mrs. Woodville would condescend to go down one dance with him.

All was perfect harmony ; every face seemed to reflect the rapture which glowed on those of the delighted bridegrooms. Ellen scarce seemed human ; her beautiful blue eyes sparkled with pleasure ; the colour on her cheek was heightened ; and her light and graceful figure resembled that of a celestial being. Deloraine gazed on her with parental pride. The adoration she excited was allowable, since the heart and mind of Ellen were as pure as her person was lovely.

Lord Mortimer and doctor Bennet owned the same power of attraction ; the former advanced to his grandchild, who was sitting between Theodore and lady Caroline—" Have you thought, my dear Ellen, on the *reward* I mentioned to you last night ?"

" Yes, my dear grandfather ; but I am still in ignorance."

" Apply

“Apply to *Theodore Woodville*,” said the earl as he left her; “*he* will best instruct you.”

Theodore looked surprised.

“Well, now, I declare,” said lady Caroline, “if here is not another secret, and I am not informed of it; I shall die with curiosity, cousin, if you do not explain what my uncle means.”

Ellen smiled sweetly on her friend—
“I must try your patience, my dear lady Caroline, until we dress for the dance; then, perhaps, if you are very good and tractable, I may ease you of your suspense.”

“Ellen, will you favour me with your hand to-night?” inquired Theodore.

“With pleasure,” replied the countess.

“Another disappointment,” exclaimed lady Caroline, affecting to be grave; “I was in hopes captain Woodville would have solicited the *honour* of being *my* partner.”

“What

“What would Mr. Beaumont say to that?” replied Ellen.

Lady Caroline beckoned to her lover, whose eyes were fixed affectionately on her lively countenance: he flew to obey her summons; and after he had heard the question of Ellen, said—“I will make a compromise with captain Woodville to exchange partners, if agreeable to the countess, after the first dance is over.”

Lady Caroline whisperingly replied—“Are you not afraid, Adolphus, to trust me with so handsome a young man? He is positively very like Edwin, only that his beauty is of a more animating kind.”

Her lover carried her hand to his lips with expressive confidence, while his eyes made the wished reply.

If her ladyship was curious to have interpreted the words of lord Mortimer, Theodore was not less so. What could it be, that the earl had desired Ellen to apply to him for instruction? He had inquired

inquired of her, but she did not promise to discover it; yet, perhaps, in the course of the evening, his solicitude might be gratified. Ellen, however, declined an explanation. She had repeated to lady Caroline the conversation of the earl, which at first produced a temporary thoughtfulness; and the tear of affection and sympathy for the fate of an absent brother filled the dark eyes of her ladyship. The innate nobleness of her disposition soon, however, dispersed her melancholy; and a smile dimpled her cheek as Ellen professed herself ignorant of her grandfather's meaning.

“And yet,” said lady Caroline, whose quickness immediately conceived the generous intent of her uncle, “you, Ellen, have alone the power of bestowing the reward—nay, look not so incredulous, dear cousin. Apply to Theodore yourself; perhaps his modesty is so great, that he will agree to your wishes without demanding any recompence

pence for abandoning the mistress of his choice, and consent to pass the remainder of his days in peace and quiet at the Castle, with his mama, my uncle, your papa, yourself and husband, *et cætera*, *et cætera*."

"I shall never marry," replied Ellen, hiding in her white bosom a heart which was suspended to a long chain of gold. "Come, Naomi, fasten these diamonds on my arm."

"Never marry!" repeated lady Caroline, with a look of surprise; "and pray, my dear coz, may I ask your reason? Because, if it is a good one, I rejoice that I am still at liberty to avoid so terrible a bondage.—Naomi, the countess has forgotten her diamond necklace.—Come, let me hear your objection to matrimony."

"It is not that I dislike so sweet a union as that of marriage," replied Ellen, blushing and unclasping her bracelet, which her maid had just fastened; "but that
that

that I do not think I shall ever meet with another Theodore."

" Bless my soul, Ellen ! how you have relieved me ! I am so glad that you have no other cause to remain single, since in this case you can marry to-morrow."

The countess raised her eyes inquiringly to the arch face of her friend, who said smilingly—" If ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise ;' but upon this occasion, Ellen, I can prove the reverse; and by increasing your stock of knowledge, add to your bliss. Why, my dear girl, what have you to do but to marry *Theodore himself*?"

Ellen started back, with a degree of astonishment that excited the risible muscles of lady Caroline. " Marry my brother !" she seemed to say. Her ladyship, who was already dressed, waited not for her cousin's reply, but hastened down stairs, and joined the company.

Ellen dismissed Naomi ; she paused for a few minutes, to recover from the

strange effect the speech of lady Caroline had produced. "Marry Theodore ! how could such a thought enter the head of her ladyship ? Was it likely that he, who had always regarded her as his sister, should be able to make so great an alteration in his feelings as to love her for a wife ? Or could *she*, accustomed to caress him as a brother, ever bring herself to receive him as a husband ? lady Caroline must certainly have been jesting with her, since it was not at all probable that the heart of Theodore would ever feel inclined to make such a transfer of his affection."

When pressed by young Woodville to explain the allusion of lord Mortimer, Ellen evaded his question, and tried to direct his attention to the happy couples before them. Theodore, however, was not so easily satisfied—"It is now, Ellen," said he, "that you remind me of the distance between us ; when I thought you were my sister, I should not have met

met

met with any denial to a request of mine."

Stung by this reproof, the countess fixed her eyes affectionately on those of Theodore—"Promise me," said she, "to grant a *request of mine*, which I shall make to-morrow; and I will, at the same time, satisfy all your curiosity."

"Oh, Ellen," replied Theodore, "well do you know the power you have over me; I cannot deny you any thing. To-morrow, I hope, will enable me to enjoy, uninterruptedly, your conversation. I have much to say to you; but the preparations for this day's felicity have so occupied your time, that I have been unable to steal half-an-hour to speak to you in private."

"Had I known that such had been your wish," said Ellen, "I would have contrived to have given you opportunity; I also have much to say. After to-night our time will be our own."

Ellen, in saying this, drew unawares

the attention of Theodore to the chain on her neck, which she unconsciously was moving.

“My lovely Ellen,” cried Theodore, with visible anxiety, “what hidden treasure is suspended to that chain? Is it the miniature of lord Edwin Wilmington?”

Ellen’s cheek became pale as the lilies in her bosom, then red as the bud of the wild rose. In a voice of magical sweetness, she replied—“No gift of lord Edwin could ever be half so dear as this,” at the same time exposing to his view the little heart which he had himself presented to her on his first entering the army.

Surprised and delighted, Theodore pressed her hand to his lips; and Ellen read in his jet-black eyes, which were now softened by excess of tenderness, a confirmation of all her hopes—for they told her that his heart was still unchanged.

The evening passed in the happiest manner;

manner; sir Godfrey taking care that Mrs. Woodville and James should have no cause to complain of his liberality; all the domestics of the Parsonage were invited to join those at the Hall; and mirth and good humour prevailed amongst them, until the great clock struck twelve, and warned them not to infringe on the sacredness of the ensuing hour.

All the family prepared the next morning to accompany James Woodville to church, where, true to his word, they discovered sir Godfrey in the midst of his guests. The marriage of Dora, to the son of his much-respected friend, seemed to have made the old gentleman young again. The Fitz-Georges were in lady Fenwick's pew, as the deep colour betrayed on the cheek of Stella Maxwell, who, at the conclusion of the service, saw, with inward pleasure, advancing towards her, in order to conduct her

K 3

home,

home, the young officer mentioned by doctor Bennet.

Theodore eagerly placed the arm of Ellen under his ; and as the weather was fine, for the season of the year, expressed a desire that she would extend their walk, to which she readily assented. Quitting, therefore, their companions, they turned into a different road, where Theodore impatiently requested Ellen to make known to him her wishes.

“ Remember,” said she, smiling on him affectionately, “ that you have promised to gratify them ; a few words, my dear Theodore, will be sufficient. I wish you to quit the army—nay, do not look so surprised ; you know the aversion I and my dear mother have always had to your being of that profession. You have lost the society of Colin Maxwell, who, out of affection to Fanny, has left the regiment, which must now be disagreeable for you to remain in.”

“ But,

“ But, my dear Ellen, it is my intention to exchange into the Guards; you forget that the army is the only hope I have of raising my fortune.”

“ But you will surely quit it at my desire ?” said she entreatingly. “ Think of the happiness you will bestow on our dear mother—think of the blissful days we shall spend at the Castle, if you consent to make one amongst us. My father and lord Mortimer will love and cherish you as a son ; and you will have the delightful satisfaction of knowing that your compliance with our mutual wishes will ensure, most effectually, our permanent comforts.”

“ Mutual wishes, Ellen ! did the earl then express a similar desire to yours ? was *that* what he meant when he bade you apply to me ?”

“ Not exactly, Theodore ; for though he said that such a circumstance was what he should rejoice at, yet you would re-

quire a reward for the sacrifice of your inclinations; and when I professed my ignorance of any higher reward than what your own feelings would bestow, he told me to apply to you."

The blood rushed into the face of Theodore; his eyes sparkled with more than their usual fire; he stopped to take breath; while Ellen, who observed his sudden agitation, became alarmed lest he was ill. Recovering himself, he silenced her fears, by assuring her that he was perfectly well.

"Then you will keep your promise, my dear brother, and make us all happy?"

"*I cannot*, Ellen; I was not aware that *you* could require any thing that *I* should be unable to grant. My honour forbids my being dependant on the generous liberality of your grandfather."

"Then you persist in continuing to remain in the army?" said Ellen, while
tears

tears of disappointment filled her eyes. "This is the *first* request that you have ever denied your sister."

"It is not a *sister* whose powerful influence I now resist, but the dangerous pleading of the countess of Brandon," replied Theodore, turning towards the path which led to the Parsonage.

"Unkind Theodore!" said Ellen, in a voice faint from her emotion; "why are you so ready to make that unwelcome distinction, while my heart acknowledges no change? while it continues to beat, it will ever love you with undiminished affection."

Theodore trembled as he hastened forward; the sight of her tears made him pause for a moment.

"Beloved Ellen!" said he, in the tenderest accents; "if the change of your situation has occasioned one in my feelings, it is no fault of mine. Every hour that I pass with you reminds me that I am no longer your *brother*—that

I can never again consider *you* as my *sister*; yet, believe me, Ellen, that I regret not your elevation, since it has placed you in a sphere of life which you are so well calculated to adorn."

He now hurried to the Parsonage, where the dejection of Ellen's countenance was immediately noticed by lord Mortimer. Taking her hand, he conducted her into the study of James, where, placing her by the fireside, he inquired if she had made known to her companion her wish that he should quit the army?

Ellen, who had not recovered from the pain occasioned by the last speech of Theodore, and was ill able to dissemble, confessed with tears her disappointed hopes, repeating faithfully the whole of their conversation.

The earl expressed his warm approbation of the conduct of young Woodville; and embracing his sorrowful grandchild, kissed the falling tears from off her cheek.

"Do

“ Do not be dispirited, my dear Ellen,” said lord Mortimer ; “ your father and I will devise some means by which your wish can be accomplished, without tarnishing the honour of Theodore. Dry your tears, my child, and be happy ; since to make you so shall be my study. I will speak to captain Woodville myself.”

Ellen flung her arms round his neck, and pressing her lips to the venerable forehead of her grandfather, retired to her own room to dress for dinner.

When all the family were collected together, and the servants withdrawn, lord Mortimer cast a glance round the table. Every face, except those of Theodore and Ellen, wore the smile of contentment. Filling his glass, he said, with a significant look towards the latter, who, with the rest of the ladies, now rose to retire—“ My dear Mrs. Woodville, you and your fair friends must take half a glass more, to drink success to the wishes of the countess of Brandon ; and may
K 6 they

they ever be as easily gratified as the present!"

Theodore looked confused, while lady Caroline, smiling archly on her favourite, said—"With all my heart, my dear uncle.—Come, captain Woodville, will you not second me in the desire?"

The toast being drank, they now left the gentlemen, when James Woodville said—"May we not ask your lordship what are the wishes of the countess?"

"Most assuredly," replied the earl; "Ellen can never entertain any that are more congenial to mine and her father's; but it rests with your brother alone to fulfil them."

All eyes were now directed towards Theodore, who coloured deeply, and felt much embarrassed.

"The discovery of Ellen's rank," continued the earl, "has not diminished, but rather increased her gratitude and love for this deserving family. She has been recently gratified by seeing the
happiness

happiness of two of its members made complete ; and she is equally desirous of establishing that of Mrs. Woodville and her youngest son. Your mother, my dear James, has kindly consented to reside with her adopted daughter, to continue to her the maternal care and affection, without which, Ellen would be deprived of her chief felicity. Theodore alone refuses to increase it, by quitting a profession disagreeable to his mother, and hateful to Ellen. Tell me, my young hero, what recompence shall I bestow, to seduce you from the arms of glory ? What reward shall I offer to make you yield to the desire of the countess, and make us all happy, by considering the Castle as your future home ?”

“ Your goodness, my lord, overpowers me,” replied Theodore, confusedly ; “ I am well aware of the generous liberality of the countess ; I am equally grateful to your lordship for your kindness in seconding her wishes ; and hope that
my

my declining to accept the happiness thus offered me, will not be construed into ingratitude to your condescension, or indifference to the noble friendship of your grand-daughter."

"I see," cried the earl, smiling benevolently on the young soldier, "that something is wanting to enhance the value of our proposal: tell me, my dear Deloraine, do you know what it is?"

"I fancy," said the father of Ellen, significantly, "that there is but *one* inducement strong enough to influence the mind of Theodore. The sweet reward of a wife's endearing tenderness—her smiles, her caresses, her grateful fondness, would, I think, make amends for his relinquishing the perilous profession of arms. Speak, Mr. Maxwell and James Woodville, am I right?"

Both immediately assented.

"It only remains, Theodore, with yourself, to acknowledge the justness of the recompence," said the earl; "will
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the love of a beautiful woman, possessing every accomplishment of form and mind, of noble birth and fortune, and whose heart is already yours—say, will the hope of making such a treasure your own, of living but to reward her affectionate preference, induce you to consent to what I now take upon myself to request?”

Theodore, more and more confused, sat trembling between hope and fear; his fine eyes were cast on the ground, and the changes of his countenance exhibited those of his mind.

“ I will distress you no longer, my dear boy,” continued the earl, “ but relieve you at once from your painful situation. Your hesitation is honourable to yourself, and proves you worthy of the happiness which awaits you. Consent to realize the wishes of the countess; quit immediately a profession which is disagreeable to her; and——” he paused, every one present but Deloraine awaited, in breathless expectation, the conclusion
of

of his speech, “ the hand of the countess is your reward.”

The earl rose—all did the same ; while they loudly and warmly expressed their admiration of his conduct. Theodore at length recovered from the astonishment into which he had been thrown, and falling on one knee before the earl and Deloraine, took a hand of each, and pressed them silently to his lips ; yet his silence, and the tears of rapture which fell from his eyes, were more eloquent than the most florid oratory.

The earl raised him affectionately—“ I will leave you now, my dear young friend, with your brother and Maxwell. Recover yourself in time to join us at the tea-table ; I will inform Ellen that her wish is gratified.”

Deloraine next embraced him—“ Not a word, Theodore,” said he, seeing him attempting to speak. “ Well do I know the state of your present feelings. In making you the guardian of my child’s happiness,

piness,

piness, I feel convinced that it is safe. From infancy you have been dear to each other: as a sister you thought her unequalled; as a wife let her be doubly dear to you. Unite the tenderness of father, brother, and husband; and prove your gratitude to God and the generous earl, by the extent of your affection for our beloved Ellen!"

They now hastened to the drawing-room, leaving Theodore in a state of painful bliss, almost bordering on insensibility, from which he was roused by "congratulations of his brother and Colin Maxwell.

Ellen was playing on the harp, when her father and lord Mortimer made their appearance. The latter took a seat by Mrs. Woodville, and whispering, told her of the compliance of her son.

"I am sorry for it, my lord," said his mother. "Forgive me for being thus candid; but I know that the independent spirit

spirit of my Theodore will not be happy, even within your hospitable walls."

"But, my dear madam, you are mistaken; the terms upon which alone he yielded to my entreaty, are such as cannot fail to render him the happiest of men."

Ellen now concluded the song; and rising, came forward to her grandfather.

"What will you give me," said he, "for an agreeable piece of news?"

The countess seated herself on his knee, and kissed his cheek; then looking inquisitively in his face, said—"Now, dearest grandfather, tell me what it is."

"Theodore has consented to quit the army, and take up his residence at the Castle."

"Oh, my dear, dear grandfather! are you serious? I will forgive his steady refusal to all *my* persuasions, since he has now agreed to make our dear mother
happy.

happy. Are you indeed in earnest? You smile, grandfather, yet you would not trifle on a subject of such importance."

"You may believe me, I assure you," replied the earl, "for he was equally resolute until I proposed a reward for his obedience—a reward, Ellen, which *you* must confirm."

"Willingly, my dear grandfather."

"Then you agree to ratify my promise?"

"Certainly. Neither you nor Theodore would, I am confident, demand anything which I should hesitate to grant."

"Bear witness, my dear friends," said the earl, "that the countess has given her consent."

"Yes, yes," was the general exclamation, "to marry Theodore Woodville!"

Ellen rose from the knee of her grandfather, confused and surprised. Deloraine felt for her embarrassment, and
taking

taking her hand, led her to Mrs. Woodville, who folded her to her bosom.

“My child, my beloved Ellen,” cried her father, “*this* was the only reward which we could bestow on Theodore; and he is worthy of it. Oh, my dear girl! may you never shed any tears but such as these!”

He pressed her fondly to his heart.

“Have you a wish ungratified *now*, Ellen?” said the earl. “Speak, my dear child; and if you have, it shall not be my fault if it is not obtainable.”

“Oh no,” replied Ellen gratefully; “but you have taken me by surprise; I did not imagine or expect such a circumstance.”

“And I,” exclaimed Mrs. Woodville, “am equally astonished at the noble conduct of lord Mortimer. This liberality of sentiment is beyond my hopes. Dearest Ellen! you will yet be my daughter; and I shall be the happiest and proudest of mothers.”

“And

“And I,” said Fanny, embracing the countess, “shall no longer deplore the loss of a beloved *sister*. Ah! how little did I imagine, when you and Theodore used to declare that you would never marry, unless you could find the counterpart of each other, that circumstances would occur to enable you to fulfil those long-cherished wishes.”

Mrs. James Woodville pressed the hand of Ellen affectionately; while lady Caroline said exultingly—“You see, my dearest coz, that you will be forced to take my advice at last.”

Ellen, when a little recovered from the suddenness of her surprise, modestly confessed that she felt no reluctance to the arrangement of her grandfather, which had given pleasure to the whole circle, and added to her own happiness—“Whatever failings *I* may possess,” said she, “are known to Theodore; he will not, therefore, be deceived in my character; while

while I have never yet been able to discover one failing that *he* possesses."

The gentlemen now entered; Theodore instantly cast his eyes on the adored form of Ellen, while Deloraine caught his arm, and leading him towards her, placed her hand in his.

"It is yours, my dear Theodore. May Heaven smile upon your union! and may the tenderness you have from childhood felt for each other receive, if possible, fresh increase every year of your lives!"

Theodore, thus encouraged, flung his arms round Ellen; and pressing his lips to hers in an extacy of love, called his Creator to witness that it should be his sole study to shew his gratitude for so precious a gift.

The pleasure this event produced at the Parsonage was soon made known to sir Godfrey and his guests, who all rejoiced that merit and talents like those of
Theodore

Theodore Woodville were so nobly rewarded.

Theodore disposed of his commission to the second son of Mrs. Fitz-George, who was already a lieutenant; and he distributed the purchase-money among the poorest of his brother's parishioners. This being accomplished, and the cold and freezing month of December having began, the earl signified his wish that Mrs. Woodville and the rest of his family would hasten their departure, since he meant to pass his Christmas at the Castle, where he expected the duke of Fitz-Aubin to join them.

James and his bride remained at the Parsonage; but Colin Maxwell and Fanny, with Stella and Jessy, accompanied the earl and the remainder of the party to his princely abode, intending to stay until his lordship proceeded to London, where Ellen's nuptials were to be celebrated, with those of lady Caroline. Doctor Bennet was also desirous of returning

turning to his own house ; promising, however, to pass part of the ensuing summer at the Castle, [where his nephew would henceforward reside during those months when it was occupied by his daughter.

It was likewise determined that, as Ellen meant to divide part of the year between the Parsonage and the Castle, James should look out for a suitable residence for Mr. Maxwell and Fanny, near to each of those habitations, which would enable them to enjoy occasionally the pleasure of each other's society.

The cheek of Stella dimpled with pleasure, when Fanny mentioned her intention of requesting that *she* might be permitted to reside wholly with her and Colin ; nor did the eyes of captain Fitz-George evince any dissatisfaction at this intelligence. The person and manners of Miss Maxwell had gained his affection, which he sought not to conceal. Colin and Fanny both esteemed him ; and as
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he had hinted that it would be necessary for him to be in town after Christmas, the former gave him an invitation to his mother's house, where he and his bride meant to reside during their stay in town.

Deloraine, willing to bestow as much of his time as he could spare from his daughter on doctor Bennet, accompanied him home, not, however, without being obliged to repeat, more than once, his determination of rejoining her at the Castle on Christmas eve. Thus assured that their separation was only a temporary one, Ellen gave way to the natural liveliness of her disposition; not even a momentary cloud obscured the heavenly sweetness of her perfect features.

Theodore, the object of her early tenderness—the destined partner of her future years, now became her constant companion. She led him over the rooms once occupied by her mother, the late countess; and repeated to him every circumstance of her melancholy fate, not forgetting

forgetting to shew him the high window by which her fond father had entered, perfectly regardless of all personal danger. The magnificent tomb which her grandfather had erected to the memory of his only child, was next the subject of their mutual attention. It was here that Theodore first learnt the extent of Leopold Courteney's baseness, and the friendly warning of the duke. Claspings her to his bosom, he returned God thanks for having preserved her from the artful designs and treacherous malice of so consummate a hypocrite, whose sole study seemed to be confined to one object—that of making himself a master-piece of villany and deception.

The mind of Theodore was too noble to exult in the misfortunes of lord Edwin; and though incapable of acting with the same blameable weakness as that young nobleman, yet he rather pitied than condemned him, and joined most sincerely with Ellen in hoping that the
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sad experience he had so lately received, would prove a salutary lesson to him in future, to act according to the dictates of his own honour and reason.

Lord Edwin had written several letters to lady Caroline, in all of which he mentioned his hopes of regaining the friendship of the countess, and expressed himself grateful for the pleasing and good-natured civilities he received from the Lisburnes—" Could I but forget," said he, " the once ardent wishes of my heart, and think of my cousin in no other light than as a relation, I should be particularly gratified by the tender interest shewn me by Matilda Lisburne, who, even more than the rest of the family, seems to pity and sympathize in the lowness of spirits which so frequently oppresses me. She is a sweet girl, and I no longer wonder at the preference you always gave her to her sisters."

From this, lady Caroline and Ellen drew the most favourable conclusions;

and as the former had now no hope of seeing him united to her favourite, and felt assured that he would never be persuaded to think of Miss Beaumont, she was desirous that he should select Matilda Lisburne, whose good temper and amiable qualities were well calculated to render the marriage state a happy one. She therefore looked forward to the delightful prospect of seeing her brother gradually recover from the severe disappointment he had sustained, and partake, as formerly, in all the innocent amusements of life. In this wish she was heartily joined by Ellen, who, though now incapable of feeling for him that high confidence and love which she once had done, nevertheless retained a lively interest in all that concerned his welfare, and the re-establishment of his peace and happiness.

CHAP. VII.

It may not now be amiss to give some account of the perfidious tutor of lord Mortimer's nephews. The return of Ellen to the Castle, but, above all, the look given him by Mrs. Woodville, awakened all his fears, and convinced him that her visit was of the utmost importance ; that in fact his hypocrisy and baseness were on the eve of being made public. Mounting his horse, which had been given him by the marquis, he told the servant that he should ride over to sir William Lisburne ; but in reality, made the best of his way to the next town, where Miss Heartless resided.

To her he had communicated the secret of Ellen's birth, and his consequent hatred ; and he now made her the confidant of all his painful suspicions. Incensed at the probability of his losing
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the liberal protection of the earl, she, instead of consoling, reproached him bitterly for his love of mischief, which, she told him, would fall upon himself.

“What,” said she, “had you to do with lord Edwin’s honourable passion for Miss Woodville? If he chose to be fool enough to marry her, why did you not let him? it would have brought on his own punishment. I always dreaded the consequences of your nasty envious disposition, which leads you to hate any person more happy or more fortunate than yourself; and now you see what it has brought on you; all will be discovered; lord Mortimer will, of course, turn you out of doors; and the prophecy of the gipsey will at length be verified, who told you of your present disgrace, and cautioned you, if you remember, as you valued your life, to avoid the anger of a young man whose intended wife you would entice away from her friends.”

“Death and the devil!” exclaimed
Courteney,

Courteney, trembling in every limb, " what demon induced you to bring to my remembrance, at this moment, such a subject as this ! even you, Betsey, are leagued against my peace. Find me a man directly to carry a note to lord Edwin ; from him I shall learn the temper of his uncle."

Courteney awaited the return of the messenger with trembling anxiety ; even the delicate cravings of his appetite were forgotten ; he could not eat ; but he swallowed a large glass of brandy, to give him courage to meet the shock he expected.

The man returned, and brought with him a letter from his pupil, enclosing the one left by lord Mortimer on the study table. The cool and determined style of the earl, his positive orders that he should quit the Castle immediately, without attempting to procure an interview, and his acknowledgment that he was perfectly aware of the extent of

his perfidy and wickedness, convinced the hypocrite that all hope was at an end. Lord Edwin's short note confirmed his heart-breaking suspicions. Deloraine, the man he hated, and the father of Ellen, was there; a reconciliation had taken place between the earl and the injured husband of the sainted Althea; and he had now to dread the just resentment of a betrayed friend and an incensed parent, since it must be fully ascertained that *he* was the author of the forged letter, and of all Ellen's preceding disgrace and mortification, arising from the jealousy of the too credulous marchioness.

Although lord Edwin did not plainly reproach Leopold for the errors he had drawn him into, yet it was evident that he thought himself the dupe of his secret hatred, and that he felt but little obliged to him for all his professions of attachment, since he was only the agent of Courteney's plan to ruin the happiness of one whom he knew to be the daughter

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ter of his best friend. His lordship told him, that as it would be unpleasant for him to enter the Castle after the discovery of the morning, Simpson, his valet, should execute any orders which he might think proper to convey to him, about the removal of his property.

Stupified with the magnitude of the loss he had sustained, Courteney for awhile remained motionless; his countenance, naturally of an ashy paleness, now resembled the livid hue of death; his eyes appeared fixed in his head; and the companion of his looser hours, the repository of his secrets, began to fear that he would be deprived of his reason. He was not in a situation to bear reproaches, or to listen to advice; she therefore endeavoured, by caresses and tenderness, to rouse him from his dangerous lethargy; and with great difficulty she succeeded in making him shed tears.

“Bad as things are,” said she, “you ought to be thankful for the five-hundred

pounds which lord Mortimer has enclosed. It will enable you to live as well as you did at the Castle, until you can procure a similar situation, or some respectable literary employment. Come, don't despair, Leopold ; send to Simpson for your things ; the sooner they are removed the better. Here, drink another glass of brandy. Come, come, rouse yourself, and be no longer cast down, like a woman, by an evil which is now irremediable."

Courteney with difficulty swallowed the brandy—"Oh, Betsey," he cried, in a voice of complete hopelessness, "I shall never be able to survive this blow. Accustomed for so many years to every luxurious comfort, I shall never be able to support a return to my former poverty ; I shall never have courage to go through my former deprivations."

"There is no necessity that you should," she replied ; "will not this money purchase all your wants, until
you

you can get into another family, or obtain resources from your talents? Let us remove immediately to London, and enjoy ourselves while we can, since we have no longer any business here."

This advice was immediately assented to by Leopold, who, after replenishing his glass with more spirit, sat down with an unsteady hand to give the requisite orders to the valet of lord Edwin. In less than a week after the dismissal of Courteney, he and his faithful partner in wickedness arrived in town, where they took a genteel first-floor, hired a servant, and, in short, lived as if they had five-hundred a-year, instead of a bank-note to that amount.

In about two months' time, their mutual extravagance had cut deep into the bounty of lord Mortimer; and Courteney, though constantly pressed by his companion to seek for some employment, as constantly made some idle excuse or other, to delay the performance of her
L 6 wishes.

wishes. Tired out with fruitless endeavours to make him conform to her prudent advice, and alarmed by his repeated hints of contenting himself with the produce of her industry, Miss Heartless thought it best to take care of herself, and break a connection with a man whose sole study was to provide for himself alone.

Taking advantage of his absence one day, when the woman of the house was also gone out to dinner, she collected all her things together, and sending for a coach, quitted the lodgings, leaving behind her a few lines, intimating her determination to part with him for ever; and hinting that the money she had taken with her would not defray the expence she had at various times incurred on his account. She took every precaution that her route might not be traced, changing the coach twice before she took a stage, which conveyed her to the house of a distant relation, near two hundred miles

miles from London, where she succeeded in becoming a partner in a very lucrative business; and as her infamy was unknown and unsuspected, she contrived to establish a good character amongst those she now meant to end her days with. Whatever might have been the vices of this woman, during her intimacy with Leopold, certain it is, that separated from him, she conducted herself with prudence, and gained the friendship of those she now associated with, and the regard of her relation.

Courteney, meanwhile, was in a state of horrible distraction. The loss of his favourite companion would not so deeply have affected him, had she not taken with her nearly the whole of the remainder of the five-hundred pounds. It was some hours before he could move from his chair, or credit the evidence of his own senses. What now was left him to do, abandoned by the partner of his voluptuousness, and robbed of what to
him

him was *every thing* in this world—HIS MONEY?

His first step was to get rid of the servant; his next to hire a cheaper lodging, which he did the next day, at a small retired cottage near Walworth. Here he by degrees removed all his things, leaving the woman only a couple of empty boxes, to pay her for the use of her rooms, plate, linen, *et cætera*. Thus reduced in his circumstances, he had not the self-denial to deprive himself of any little luxury which his appetite required, but feasted every night with the people of the house, upon some delicacy or other.

The house in which he now resided belonged to an honest and industrious widow, who had been the wife of a respectable tradesman. At his death, she, with an only daughter, retired to this cottage, where they endeavoured to add to their limited income, by making artificial flowers, which they sold to several

veral of the best shops in town; they likewise looked forward to what would arise from the letting of their lodgings; and rejoiced when they were taken by so gentlemanly, so respectable a looking man as Leopold Courteney. His appearance and manners, which were considerably improved by his long residence at the Castle, prepossessed each in his favour; and Mrs. Lumley and her daughter testified their pleasure and satisfaction by every attention in their power to their new lodger, who, on his part, spent the chief of his time either in reading to amuse them, or in doing some little trifle to assist them in their business.

Lucy Lumley was about nineteen, of a pleasing person, amiable temper, and genteel address; but her mind was unfortunately injured by the frequent and indiscriminate reading of novels and romances. She was much and sincerely beloved by a young man, who was apprenticed to a neighbouring surgeon, and

who in a few weeks expected to be out of his time, and to be taken into partnership with his master. He had for three months paid his addresses to Lucy, with the consent of her mother; and every leisure hour that he could snatch from his profession, was devoted to the object of his love.

Courteney, however, had not seen him; he had called one evening for half-an-hour, as the gentleman whom he lived with was ill, and unable to attend his business.

It occurred to Courteney, that the skill evinced by Lucy in making flowers, and the great demand she now had for them, would be a comfortable support for him, could he but persuade her to leave her mother and the young doctor, and elope with him. It was worth a trial; since his money was almost expended, and he felt no inclination to exert himself to obtain more.

Representing himself, therefore, as a single man, of large connections, and still

still greater expectations, from the death of an old uncle, he, under promise of making her his wife, upon the demise of this relation, gained the consent of this weak and credulous girl to elope with him, one evening, when her mother was gone out with the produce of their mutual employment. Leopold went himself for a coach, into which he put Lucy, not forgetting to take with him every thing which belonged to her and himself.

It was dusk when Miss Lumley, with her treacherous companion, drove past the house of her young lover. The fear of being seen by him made her lean forward, as they came near the door, at which he was standing. Hastily drawing back her head, she expressed her apprehension that he had seen her ; but Courteney soothed away her fears ; and by his artful protestations of regard, and his promises of what he would do for her family, soon reconciled her to the imprudent step she had taken.

Features

Features so well known and so well beloved, could not be mistaken by the young surgeon. Wondering where Lucy could be going, and being particularly anxious to speak to her, he ran after the coach, and got up behind it, wishing to surprise her on its stopping. It chanced that the cover of the window behind was not completely over the glass, and as curiosity more or less dwells in every bosom, the young doctor could not resist the impulse he felt to know who were the companions of his intended wife. What was his horror and agonized surprise when, by the light of some lamps, he discovered his adored Lucy alone with a gentleman, on whose bosom she was leaning, and whose arms encircled her waist. With difficulty he kept his place: the bundles and other things which the coach contained—the endearments which passed between them, all confirmed him in the dreadful belief that she had quitted the protection of the maternal roof.

roof. One only thing was left him, which was to see where she went to, and save her, if possible, from the ruin upon which she was rushing.

The coach stopped at a small private house in one of the streets near Blackfriar's Bridge ; and Courteney, after conducting Miss Lumley up stairs, came back, assisted the maid to carry in the luggage, and then discharging the coachman, closed the street door.

The lover of Lucy had no ray of hope that he might have been deceived in his first suspicions. Half frantic with their confirmation, he hastened to the house of a friend who lived at a little distance, of whom he borrowed a case of pistols; and then hurrying back, he knocked with a trembling hand at the door of their habitation. It was opened by the maid-servant, who, on his requesting to speak to her mistress, conducted him into a back-parlour, in which she was sitting. Endeavouring

deavouring to compose himself, he asked her if she had not some rooms to let ?

“ No, sir,” replied the woman ; “ I have let them to a gentleman and his wife, who are but just now come into them, otherwise I should have been happy to have accommodated you.”

“ I saw a gentleman and lady get out of a coach about half-an-hour ago,” said the lover of Miss Lumley ; “ are *they* your new lodgers ?”

“ Yes, sir ; they have taken my first-floor. My maid is to do for them. I rather think they are but just married ; for the lady looks so timid and shy. She has made a prudent choice, however, for he is old enough to be her father.”

“ I must speak to her,” said he, rising with visible agitation ; “ she is one of my dearest friends ; I must congratulate her on her marriage—nay, do not trouble yourself, madam, we do not stand on ceremony with each other.”

Saying this, he darted out of the parlour,

four, and was on the landing-place of the first-floor before she had gained the second stair. His feelings did not indeed allow of ceremony ; opening, therefore, the door of the apartment, he presented himself to Courteney and Miss Lumley, the latter of whom uttered a cry of astonishment, and clung to her betrayer.

“ Oh, Lucy !” exclaimed the young man, sinking into a chair near the door ; “ why do I see you here without your mother ? Who is that man, who has seduced you away from your home, and for whose *wife* you wish to *pass* !—Oh, Lucy, Lucy ! is this the return for all my love—all my delicate tenderness towards your person and character, that you should abandon me for one who is a stranger to you ?”

Courteney, grown bold by the distress of his youthful rival, now advanced towards him. “ And who are you,” he impudently demanded, “ who thus dares to intrude upon the privacy of our retirement ? .

irement? Begone, fellow, to your counter, from which, I suppose, you came, or I will kick you down stairs!"

"Will you!" replied the doctor, rising immediately and coming up to him; "before I answer to your question, sir, I must tell you that your conduct is that of a scoundrel—not a gentleman! All I ask of you is, to restore Miss Lumley instantly to her mother; nor will I quit her until I have seen her safe under her care, notwithstanding your insolent menace."

"These apartments are mine, rash boy," cried Leopold angrily; "and I insist upon your leaving them immediately. Miss Lumley is here by her own consent; and with my life I will retain her. I therefore advise you, if you value whole bones, to decamp as quick as possible."

A scuffle now ensued, upon which Lucy ran down in alarm, to request the assistance of the mistress of the house. Her lover, freeing himself from the grasp
of

of Courteney, who had struck him more than once, hastily locked the door, and drawing from his coat pocket the pistols, presented him with one, saying—" Boy as I am, sir, you see I come prepared to act a manly part !"

Courteney, coward as he was, yet felt himself incensed at the determined bravery of his young antagonist. Miss Lumley was also his last stake ; if he was deprived of *her*, he might probably starve, since he relied upon her exertions for his future support. Desperate from circumstances, he caught the pistol out of his rival's hand, and falling back a few paces, fired, but luckily without effect. The aim of the faithful lover was more certain ; and Courteney fell, severely wounded.

The report of the pistols brought up the mistress of the house, her maid, and Miss Lumley, with the next-door neighbours, who broke into the room, and discovered Courteney on the ground, his
rival

rival kneeling by his side, trying to stop the effusion of blood with his handkerchief.

Lucy clasped her hands together, and exclaimed, in an agony of horror and distress—" Oh, Leopold! what have you done? You have killed Mr. Courteney!" then sunk into the arms of the maid.

" Courteney!" cried the youth, starting up with indescribable horror; "Courteney! is that the name of this gentleman, to whom I owe the ruin of all my promised happiness? No matter. Fly, some one, I conjure you, for a surgeon, to extract the ball!" then flinging himself on a seat, he continued—" Oh God! why is the name of Courteney to be forever branded with treachery and deception?"

A surgeon arrived, extracted the ball, and pronounced the wound mortal!

The livid hue of death overspread the countenance of Leopold; he feebly called
ed

ed to his side his youthful antagonist, who slowly advanced, as if his feelings were repugnant to the summons.

“Bear witness,” said Courteney, “that I acquit this youth of any intention to take my life ; he is guiltless of my death ! In self-defence alone he fired ;” then turning towards the surgeon, he said—“Are there no hopes of my recovery ?”

“I dare not deceive you, sir,” was the reply ; “you cannot survive many hours !”

Courteney uttered a groan of terror !

“Shall I send to your friends, to inform them of your danger ?” inquired the surgeon.

Courteney gave a convulsive start, and shook his head.

“God knows my heart and its intentions !” said the lover of Lucy ; “nothing but the dread of the dishonour which would be brought on Miss Lumley, and the misery her poor mother would feel at hearing of her elopement and ruin,

could have tempted me to risk the life of a fellow-creature. Dearly as I loved her, had she been really married, or had you, sir, meant to make her your wife, I should have put up silently with the loss of my own peace of mind; but your bringing her here secretly, and passing yourself upon this lady as her husband, proves that she was intended only to be your *mistress*! This, this alone, has been the fatal cause of what has happened."

Miss Lumley was so exceedingly affected, that she was obliged to retire to another room, to await the arrival of her mother, who had been sent for by the person of the house.

Her lover now inquired if Courteney did not wish his friends to be apprized of the situation he was in?

"I have no friends!" exclaimed Leopold, in a voice of agony; "no friends! Not a human being exists that would shed a tear over my corpse—that would not rejoice,

rejoice, rather than lament, at the justice of my punishment! Poor Lucy! thou art saved from the disgraceful life I intended for thee! Thou alone, amongst the numerous victims to my perfidy, hast escaped. Oh, ye dear injured innocents, *now, now you are revenged!*"

He paused, from the increasing pain of his wound. The surgeon, who was a man of skill and humanity, felt deeply interested for the young man, as well as for his patient; he therefore determined to remain, and try whether his advice or assistance might be serviceable to either. After giving Courteney a few drops, he seemed to revive; and casting a look of anxiety round the chamber, said to the doctor, who supported him—"Thank you, sir, for your kindness; let me entreat that you will bear witness to the innocency of this youth. I struck him—I abused him—I provoked him to fire; but not until *I* had first aimed at his life!—Young man, do you pardon me the insulting

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sulting language I made use of? Oh God! let not *his* blood rise up against me; let not *his* death be added to the long list of my enormities!"

The lover of Lucy, deeply affected, and struggling with a variety of emotions which he could not well define, replied—"I forgive you, sir, and hope that the Almighty will pardon my crime; since I feel that, should I be acquitted of MURDER, the idea of having been the means of depriving a fellow-creature of existence will embitter every moment of my own."

"Excellent young man!" exclaimed Leopold; "let the caution of a dying sinner sink deep into your bosom. Beware of envy and hypocrisy! I am a sad example of their fatal influence. Once I possessed the love and conjugal fidelity of an amiable woman, whom I married—the regard and confidence of a friend, who, was indeed inestimable. My friend I betrayed—made miserable for life; my
patient

patient unoffending wife, my children, I deserted—left them to starve—to die in a workhouse—to rot on a dunghill ; while I rioted in luxury, spending among the most worthless of women what would have maintained them comfortably !”

The young man gave a start of agonizing surprise ; and bending forward, scarce breathed, lest a word should escape his hearing.

“ Every human being whom I have associated with, I have deceived ; every female that trusted to my professions, I have seduced. Oh, my poor wife ! my poor boys ! if ye yet exist, how must you curse the memory of your father !”

All around him now manifested the greatest horror. A clergyman was immediately sent for ; but the cold dew of death hung on the face of the expiring hypocrite.

Clasping his hands together, he feebly said—“ I cannot pray—I dare not pray ; my crimes are too numerous ; my guilt

too aggravated, to hope for mercy. Sybella ! Deloraine ! Susan ! your destroyer is at length destroyed !”

“ Sybella ! Deloraine !” exclaimed the youth, rising from his kneeling posture. “ Oh, what of them ? Speak, I conjure you ! they are *both* dearer to *me* than all the world !”

The dying man half raised himself, and fixing his glazed eyes on the horror-struck youth, faintly articulated—“ Sybella Courteney, Edmund Deloraine—my wife, my friend !” then sunk back into the arms of the compassionate surgeon.

The youth for a moment appeared motionless ; then striking his forehead with his clenched hands, cried in a voice which roused the fleeting spirit of the sinner—“ Oh, thou Almighty disposer of events ! was it necessary that the cruel injuries of my beloved mother should be avenged by *my* hand ? Was it necessary that the SON should be the MURDERER of his FATHER ?”

He

He sunk into a chair, and covering his face with both hands, sobbed violently ; while the expiring penitent, making a last effort, held open his arms in token of pardon. The cry of terror uttered by the surrounding females announced that the vital spark had fled. Young Leopold rushed towards the bed, and falling on one knee, raised his eyes and hands to Heaven, to supplicate forgiveness for his unnatural parent.

The shock of this discovery, the horror of having been the instrument of divine justice towards his father, overcame the agitated youth ; and he was conveyed to the house of the benevolent surgeon, to await the verdict of the coroner.

Mrs. Courteney, who still continued to reside in the same house that Deloraine had placed her in, hastened to his temporary prison. Fortunately for her, lord Mortimer's family were arrived in London ; and she immediately dispatched a messenger to Deloraine, who lost no time

in obeying her summons. Shocked at the fatal termination of his treacherous enemy's career, he soothed the afflicted wife and son of Courteney; went himself to the house where he lay, and gave the necessary directions for the disposal of the body.

On the proper evidence of those who were present at the confession of the dying man, the unhappy youth was acquitted; and poor Sybella's mind was made easy respecting her son. Yet it was impossible for either of them to forget the dreadful end of the wretched hypocrite. Deloraine's continued kindness alone enabled them to support themselves under the horror of their feelings. Mrs. Courteney, no longer under any dread of being insulted or ill treated by her husband, agreed to give up her business, and to reside for the future with doctor Bennet, as his housekeeper and companion. Her eldest son, who had unfortunately been the avenger of her wrongs, accompanied her down, and was
taken

taken into partnership by a very worthy man, a neighbouring surgeon of extensive practice ; so that young Courteney had but little leisure time for melancholy reflections ; and her youngest, and second surviving son, chose to turn farmer on the doctor's estate.

Maria, her sister, and the generous sharer of her misfortunes, had been married some years to a respectable tradesman ; and had become, to the great joy of Sybella, a happy wife, and a happy mother.

In removing to doctor Bennet's, Mrs. Courteney, who now assumed her own name, had the delightful satisfaction of seeing her sons constantly, and of embracing the still grateful Susan, who took the first opportunity of expressing her pleasure at her kind friend's removal. Both these amiable women shed tears, in speaking of the terrible end of their cruel enemy ; both fervently prayed that,

in the next world, his sins might be forgiven as readily as they had pardoned the injuries he had done them.

Thus terminated the life of the envious, the designing, the treacherous and hypocritical Leopold Courteney; cut off in the meditation of fresh villany, and by the hand of his own son, of that son whom, in his helpless infancy, he had abandoned to want, disease, and misery. Even his last moments were among strangers, whose natural humanity alone prompted them to afford assistance to so dreadful, so shocking a character. Nothing remained of the bounty of lord Mortimer. His gold watch he had pledged, to defray the expences of his elopement; and Deloraine, the man whom he had most injured, whose happiness he had so cruelly, so wantonly destroyed, generously paid the bill for his funeral, making the woman of the house a present of his cloaths and books, with a bank
note,

note, to make some amends for the distress of mind which the accident had caused her.

Lord Mortimer and his family heard of Courteney's death with compassionate sorrow. The universal feeling was regret that he had not survived the wound, which *might* have worked a total reformation in his principles and heart. Yet again they remembered his complete depravity; and the recollection of *that* made them rejoice that at least he no longer possessed the power to destroy the happiness of the innocent and the credulous.

The noble nature of Deloraine did not admit of any exultation at the severe and heavy punishment of his perfidious enemy. He remembered with a sigh the wish he had himself expressed to Courteney, when the latter hinted at the possibility of lord Mortimer's setting aside his union with the countess.

“Is there a man,” was then the reply of Deloraine, “once a husband and a father, possessing a heart alive to those endearing names, and a soul noble and generous, that would seek to separate two beings fondly attached to each other? Oh, if there does, may the vengeance of Heaven pursue him through the world! may he, in his last moments, vainly sigh for the tender hand of a wife, a child, to close his dying eyes!”

It may be remembered that Leopold suddenly interrupted his friend, as if conscious of his own future destiny. Deloraine recollected it; and lamented that the perfidious villany of Courteney had realized too truly the wish of the moment. Had it been possible, Deloraine would much rather have been witness to his repentance; and as this was not the will of Providence, he forgot, in the idea of his terrible fate, all his former guilt and treachery towards himself; had him

him interred with decent neatness ; and renewed his affectionate liberality towards his deeply-afflicted family.

Time, which reconciles the human mind to the most painful occurrences, softened down the anguish of Mrs. Courteney ; and gratitude to Deloraine and his excellent uncle roused her to do justice to their kindness, and to contribute as much as was in her power towards making the declining years of the latter pass as pleasantly as she could. Her mild and interesting manners, joined to the knowledge of her former sufferings, have so won upon the benevolent heart of doctor Bennet, that he has settled an annuity upon her for life ; resolving to place her even independent of the dutiful affection of her sons, who, fortunately for themselves, resemble her in every thing that can make them beloved. Their unremitting attention to their mother, their lively gratitude to their guardian angel and his uncle, prove how totally

tally dissimilar are their hearts and minds from those of their treacherous and deceitful father.

Deloraine, the noble protector of this injured and abandoned family, is keenly alive to the blessings and unexpected happiness which has fallen to his lot ; in the contemplation of his daughter's felicity as the wife of Theodore Woodville, he feels a reward for all his former agonies. The smile of tenderness, of contentment, which ever dwells on her enchanting countenance—the steady and uniform love of Theodore, evinced in a variety of trifling kindnesses, leave him no room to doubt of the continuance of their bliss ; as far as mutual affection, mutual confidence, and the society of beloved relatives, can contribute to earthly happiness, it is theirs.

Lady Caroline Wilmington, the generous friend of the young countess, was married on the same day as her favourite : her gay good-humour remains unchanged,

changed, although she can no longer boast of being free and independent; while her brother, the marquis, is grown more domestic, and fond of home, since the birth of a son and heir, which has greatly increased his regard for the marchioness.

Mrs. James Woodville and Mrs. Maxwell have each received an addition to their conjugal bliss, by the arrival of two little strangers, who are both christened after their mothers; and Stella Maxwell, who lives with Colin and Fanny, at their new house, between the Parsonage and the Castle, is upon the eve of bestowing her hand on captain Fitz-George, in which case Jessy, her sister, is to supply her place.

Lord Mortimer resides wholly at the Castle, which is the principal residence of the countess and Theodore; while Mrs. Woodville and Deloraine divide their time amongst those most dear to them; and lady Caroline and the duke

of Fitz-Aubin have promised to pass part of each summer with their beloved countess, at Mortimer Castle.

All of the two families are now assembled at this ancient and magnificent residence, to welcome the birth of two dear and innocent beings, whose smiles and infantine charms will increase the felicity of their parents. The countess and lady Caroline both expressed their wish to be confined under the same roof; the former even made choice of those apartments, and of the same bed which was so fatal to her lovely mother.

The feelings of Theodore and of Deloraine may well be imagined by those who have been placed in the same agonizing situations, the same agonizing suspense. Mrs. Woodville was the messenger of their felicity; the countess was safe, was well, and the mother of a fine boy.

Lady Caroline said, laughingly—"I rejoice that my cousin's little darling
is

is a son, as I mean to have a girl, and they will make a good match for each other."

The words of her ladyship were verified; in about a week afterwards, she gave birth to a daughter, who was named Ellen, on the same day that the son of the countess was christened after the duke of Fitz-Aubin, who stood godfather to both the children, and who could not help joining in the wish of the two friends, that at a future period these idolized beings might be united.

Poor old Mrs. Mason is still alive, and as much as ever the favourite of the countess and Deloraine; while lord Edwin alone remains at times dissatisfied with his lot, as he cannot avoid sometimes recurring to former days of love and hope, when Ellen, believing him all he seemed to be, acknowledged that he was dear to her: his good sense, and the tenderness of lady Caroline, has, however, greatly assisted him towards
being

being reconciled to what is now unavoidable.

The sweet friendship of the countess he has again been honoured with ; and the flattering and affectionate conduct of Theodore, on his first introduction to him, proved that he was indeed worthy of the love and preference of Ellen.

The intimacy between the family at the Castle and that of sir William Lisburne was greatly increased when they met again ; and Matilda, who had been chiefly instrumental in restoring lord Edwin to cheerfulness, was now more than ever at the Castle.

Indeed it was only in listening to her tender voice, and gazing on her mild and affectionate countenance, that the repentant pupil of Leopold Courteney, the HYPOCRITE and MODERN JANUS, found any solace for the disappointment he had met with, in his first attachment. Confiding to his sister the real state of his feelings, she advised him to marry Matilda

da Lisburne, and make a short tour to the lakes the ensuing summer ; since her constant society, her extreme tenderness, and watchful care to anticipate his wishes, would effectually restore him to tranquillity and happiness.

Lord Edwin has accordingly proposed himself to sir William, who, without hesitating for a moment, gave his consent to his marrying his daughter. This circumstance has given much satisfaction to lord Mortimer and the dowager marchioness ; in short, to every one attached to lord Edwin and Miss Lisburne.

The news of this intended union soon reached the ears of Miss Beaumont, who had vainly allowed herself to hope that she might yet recover the affections of lord Edwin : piqued at his indifference to her personal attractions, and mortified by his evident dislike to fulfil his implied engagement to herself, Clarissa resolved that *her* nuptials should convince his lordship and the world how mutual was
their

their coldness. To effect this, she accepted the offer of a young nobleman, who had become her constant attendant since she quitted the Castle ; and her brother learnt from his mother that Clarissa had consented to become lady Douglass, much to the gratification of her grandfather, the duke of *****, who was so eager to be a witness to her happiness, that it was more than probable her next letter would contain an account of the wedding.

Preparations are now making for the celebration of the nuptials of lord Edwin and Matilda Lisburne, which is to be celebrated at the seat of sir William, with great magnificence. The countess and lady Caroline, in particular, look forward to this event with pleasure ; blest to their utmost wishes, in the endearing affection of their husbands, the dimpled smiles of their healthy infants, and the love of all their relations and friends, they only want to be convinced that the
truly

truly penitent pupil of the deceased HYPOCRITE partakes sincerely of their felicity, and that he has ceased to remember how fondly he once cherished the hope of becoming the husband of Ellen Woodville—of that Ellen who was the sole offspring of Edmund Deloraine and of Althea, countess of Brandon !

FINIS.

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